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# 10 LESSONS AND INSIGHTS

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For Thriving in the 21st Century



VICTOR K. MAKAU

## Acknowledgement.

I wish to thank my parents, teachers, influencers and motivators- all who have played a big role in shaping me.

All the men and women who have authored timeless books from which we glean invaluable gems of knowledge to help us face life boldly.

My friends, all who have believed in me and encouraged me in the not so easy journey of writing this book.

The Maseno University Christian Union fourth year class of 2019 and the Media and IT team - thank you for all you have taught me, and the love.

## Dedication

To the Almighty God.

My parents, Daniel and Rhoda. You are the wind beneath my wings.

My brothers Francis, Joseph, Evans and Fred, and my sisters Linnet, Emma, Faith and Grace.

You are family I will forever treasure.

To all the millennials who are braving the challenges of this age, and making indelible contributions to our world. The future awaits us.

## About the author

I am a fourth year student of computer science at Maseno University. I love to make software, to read and think about the future. I am passionate about the story of the millennials, the opportunities and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how to tackle them, and the pursuit of excellence in all matters of life. I also believe that not everyone is born into success, but anyone can be a success if they so choose and put in the necessary work with the right attitude.

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## Prologue

*"If at 40 begins the mid-life crisis, then 20s must be the quarter-life crisis"*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century young person has been dealt a bad hand. A generation that is paying the price of being born in the most unanticipated of times. Humanity has lived a sure, undisturbed life for many centuries, but that safety is now gone. The sail has always been smooth and non – monumental, until now. A time when nothing is constant; the world seems to have been caught up in a metamorphic frenzy. Trends are changing as fast as we can scroll down our newsfeeds. Information is competing with light for seeds, politics has just come home from playing in the mud. Families are shaken and often broken, leaving society on its crutches. Religion is marred with the very sins that it seeks to atone for. And no one is more affected the millennial.

It is sad that even the models that we look up to are drinking themselves to shameful stupors and trading their character for pennies. At times we turn to football and gambling hoping that we might forget the bitter reality for a moment. Or drink and inject substances in a bid to face life on a high. Yet we do not forget at all. We may be high, but remain very sober to the uncertainties of the moment.

University education has more often than not failed to deliver the dividends that it promised. Remembering the tears and sweat we shed to earn our degrees leaves us disappointed. But we are afraid of facing the fact that the system - all well-oiled for the past centuries- simply does not work so well anymore. The emperor is naked, yet we deny that we see anything of consequence.

Millennials have often been labelled the jelly-like generation; the blue band kids with no spine who are easily influenced for they lack morals and a sense of self-worth. They are lost and rebellious. They are the seemingly misplaced gems of human history- like roses in the world.

As millennials, we more often than not adopt an indifferent attitude to the way we lead our lives. We seem to have accepted the pre-programming of society, and are not actively seeking the true essence of life. In the process, our minds have been numbed and your reason frozen. Creativity and innovativeness- the basic hallmarks of educated people- have been suppressed. This is a collective result of society's irresponsibility and our hesitation alike.

There are those who have awoken to the reality. Young people who have made the decision to captain their fate. Realizing the importance of the season of youth, these youths are daring enough to shake the status quo, test their limits and expose their potential to society. Like the caterpillar that metamorphoses into a butterfly no longer held back in her cocoon, they are making the world a little brighter.

I am reminded of Malala. As a young Pakistani girl, she has amazed the great of the world, at the same time showing us what exactly a millennial is capable of achieving. At her young age, she already has won a Nobel Peace Prize, a very rare achieving. She continues to fight for the rights of girls all over the globe. Whenever Malala offers her opinion on global issues, world leaders pay attention. What an extraordinary world we would have if our girls, and all young people, learned a lesson from her.

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century is not the age for a laissez-faire lifestyle. We need to realize that the world has changed. The winners today are not the most educated ones, but rather the most informed. We need to stop believing the façade that our education system alone (developed centuries B.C) is an enough prerequisite for greatness in this century. One needs to lose faith a little in university education so as to successfully face the challenges of the new millennium.

I feel for the young people whom society and the system have held prisoner with ideas that worked excellently in previous generations but which fail terribly in this century. Young people need to be awakened. Our generation is the most unfortunate one in history because we are presently facing unprecedented global circumstances, yet we have had no one to prepare us for the world we have inherited. It is no secret that the global stage has changed drastically at the turn of the new millennium; the train has derailed since the tracks no longer work. While our parents rode successfully on the old tracks, we, their children, have to somehow grow wings and fly because the world no longer accepts trains. Some of us may prefer the train- it will be simile and convenient- but it will only go that far.

It is worrisome that millennials are not reading books. Quite astounding. University students who are expected to be the guardians of society's knowledge only read lecturers' handouts and notes. We have to stop that and stand up for our generation. This is our time.

I am not seeking to fuel a generational war, but if millennial are to take full advantage of the opportunities of this century, we have to adopt a new way of thinking other than what we have been taught.

Now, let's embark on this journey together, shall we?

## 1: Dare to risk

*“The greatest risk in life is not taking any risks” – Mark Zuckerberg*

I am convinced that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the most exciting time to be alive. It is not a particularly perfect epoch, in fact, the perils of our time are far greater compared to those of years past. The history of man has been long, full of challenges and successes alike, and the last several thousand years have been leading to this very period of time that we are privileged to live in. A time when being alive alone is a great risk.

Today, the possibility of the total annihilation of the human race is more real than it has ever been. Nuclear arsenal and bio weaponry have given nations the ability to wipe out the entire world population in a matter of seconds. The only factor hindering such a scenario is the idea of mutually assured destruction – a world war of the 21<sup>st</sup> century would have no winners because all the nations would be turned to ash and cities left as rubble. This is without considering what would happen if such weapons find their way into the hands of terrorist groups.

This world of perpetual danger and risk is the same one in which billionaires are being churned overnight at an unbelievably young age. Take for instance the Facebook founder and billionaire, Mark Zuckerberg, commonly known as Zuckman. At the young age of nineteen, he launched the social networking site from his dorm room in Harvard. The site gained popularity quite fast within the campus and other universities within the United States, finally opening its doors to the public a year later. The Facebook story is one of extraordinary achievement, and a young titan leading a team of more than a thousand employees to build the world's largest community, accumulating data worth billions of dollars as well as cash. This is a replica of what happened with Instagram, WhatsApp, twitter, Tinder, Airbnb, Uber – all multi-billion dollar companies started by young, daring entrepreneurs who dared to think different and follow their dreams even when the future didn't look promising. Today, they rule the cyber world.

Having grown up receiving advice from my parents and other older people, as well as reading about the Zuckerberg pool of young people, I have realized the striking difference between my dad's generation and what our generation needs – the level of risk appetite. For some reason, people who grew up in the mid and late twentieth century have a deep sense for security. They value regular jobs very much because they give them financial security by entitling them to a monthly income every month. They bear many children to cover for the risks of some falling sick or not being successful enough in life. They are afraid of investing because they might lose their money. However, this does not make them less ambitious people, it is simply the rules of their time that required them to adopt such a mind-set of risk avoidance. To them, being responsible means playing it safe and never exposing oneself to risk. However, at 21, I have realized that:



## *The rules of the new millennium are set up such that anyone who avoids risk will live on the side lines as the risk takers run the show.*

The elephant in the room is that while our generation needs a new set of rules for success, we are being trained by people who have mastered the old ones. We therefore lose the game before the whistle is blown. We take our kids to school hoping that they will gain an education to help them solve the millennial challenges, yet leave them in the hands of teachers who grew up in a different century, some of whom make no particular effort to refresh their knowledge and perspective of the world. In our universities, the mark of a true professor is a white beard, someone who has courted books but divorced the modern times. Therefore, graduates leave the university to face the world with a twentieth century mentality of playing it safe. They dare not start companies. They would rather be caught up in what R. Kiyosaki in Rich Dad Poor Dad refers to as the “Rat race” all their life than take advantage of technology and find innovative solutions to modern challenges. Hence, there results a situation where the world holds a lot of potential for progress but there are is no one to utilize it because our minds have been condition to look for twentieth century opportunities in a new century. Our society has it wrong at that point.

The kind of risk that I discuss is not the reckless type where one gambles with life without thinking of the future. It is taking calculated risks, bravely stepping away from comfort zones and pursuing our ambitions even when the odds are not entirely in our favor. It is Mark Zuckerberg who stated that “*the greatest risk in life is not taking any risk at all*”.

An important secret to achieving great progress in our age is having the temerity to “fail fast”. This is a common Silicon Valley ideology that emphasizes on risky innovations that give one the experience needed to make even greater innovations, even when the current projects fail. To quote Mark Zuckerberg again, his personal mantra is “move fast and break things”. That is the true 21<sup>st</sup> century mind set. Do not sit around and wait for someone to employ you. Simply get up and innovate, find solutions to problems that people are facing. Even if you fail at first, learnt the lesson that the failure teaches you, and then try again. Fail hard, fail fast, fail forward. That is the true spirit of a millennial. There are no jobs waiting for you. There are people waiting on you to create jobs for them. Remember, it is not too late to break the go to school, pass exams, get employed, get married, pay bills and retire cycle that society has taught you.

I am not against employment. Actually, most times it is the best option to take. The important point is, in the words of Dr. Myles Munroe, do not miss your purpose while stuck on a job. Do not allow the fear of failure to keep you living a chicken’s life. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, those who play by the old rules will survive. However, those who adopt the new rules and take necessary risks will thrive. At 21, I have had to ask myself this question severally, do I want to simply survive or to thrive, to follow standards or to set standards? The answer has always motivated me to take risks.

You have to live your life with a sense of urgency. Never settle until you have actualized your full, God-given potential. Learn to live deliberately. At times, it becomes easy and even convenient to slow down the tempo of life and go through life in slow mode. We may be tempted to settle for the conditions we find ourselves in instead of striving to make an impact in our lives; we may be allured to ride with the tides in the hope that they will take us somewhere safe. Well, sadly, they will not.

*“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who choose to accept what has been given them, instead of exploring the choices they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact, it is an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration, it is a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is nothing.” - Muhammad Ali.*

There is need for the individual to take responsibility for their life and destiny, and consciously make necessary effort towards that direction. A lot of the time that may involve pushing yourself. The journey will never be easy. A lot of sacrifices will be called upon. It may mean waking up early in the morning, before everyone else, and working on your talents. Or you may need to hit the gym, and do so when every part of your body is telling you not to. Always remember that your body is naturally wired to do that which is easy. But you need to learn to master it, and focus your mental energies in the direction that you want your life to head to. The wise ones said it right: no pain, no gain.

Still, other times it will be people around you who will try to discourage you from pursuing your dreams and to dissuade you from doing what you must to achieve your goals. In life, there will always be someone who will try to convince you that you cannot do it. They are the naysayers and the cowardly ones; people so full of negativity that they try hard to rub it off onto those around them. Do not listen to them and do not allow your mind to be poisoned by their pessimism. They will wear you down with complains, doubts and fear until you neglect those dreams that you so dearly hold within you. You have to always believe that God has deposited unimaginable power inside of you, and that you owe it to yourself and the world to exploit it to the very last ounce so that you may fulfil the purpose for which you were born. In the words of Thomas Jefferson:

*“It is better to have dared mighty things, than to rank with those timid souls who neither suffer much nor enjoy much”*

It is often an option that human beings have: to dissolve into the mundane rhythm of an uneventful life and live with false hope that all will be alright. Spending a lifetime at the parking lot, without ever trying anything new or exposing oneself to challenges that are necessary to spur personal growth and maturity. In that state, a person usually lets the society to dictate the course of his life, and the system to be jury that passes judgement as to what they can and cannot do. The manacles of dogma and chains of the fear of the unknown eventually measure and cut out for them their little piece of life, as they drowsily spent their days meeting deadlines and paying bills, before their days eventually expire and go away as unnoticed as when they arrived. Sadly, as that pile of earth descends on the final six-foot deep resting place, the chants of 'we are dust and to dust we shall return' accurately but miserably sum up the life they have lived. A life of always choosing to play it safe, a life of false security and unwillingness to face risks.

Self-reassuring sentiments such as "No one has ever it", "I will do that when I'm older, married, and richer" are common with the people who choose to cower instead of facing and taking necessary risks. These are just masks to hide the fact that they are afraid to try. Fear of failure can cuff a human being and hold them prisoner in the cells of self-pity.

This has been the story of many millennials. This is worrying because the 21<sup>st</sup>-century is the wrong time to take the tranquilizing drug of non-commitment. It is an age so full of opportunity that anyone from any art of the world has the full capacity to transform the world if they have the right ideas. It is a time of change and challenge alike. A century like no other whereby information is the currency of trade. In the past a person had to own lands and slaves in order to be influential and successful. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you only need to know the right things and know them pretty well and that will make you the most powerful person on the planet. The age of horses and baronets is far gone, and cyber age is here.

While it is true that people are born into different backgrounds and degrees of fortune, making excuses for failing to utilize the opportunities of the moment to change one's life will not help.

The comfort zone is the area of our lives where nothing goes wrong, and nothing progresses either. The one truth about the comfort one is that, sooner or later, it turns into a regret zone. When in the comfort zone, there is always that small voice at the back of the mind reminding us that we are meant for more than that. You may pause and think of the area of your life that you have let settle in the comfort zone. It maybe because you are afraid of failure. You have never developed your public speaking skills for fear that people will laugh at you. Or you have always wanted to sing but never gathered the courage to go for a single audition or even sing to your friends. You always know the right answers but never raise your hand to try and instead let others to do it.

The world would be a much better place if stupid people were not so confident in their ignorance and smart people so afraid of asserting their values. You have to gather the courage and try. You owe it to yourself. You have put yourself down for far too long, and now would be the right time to step out and step up to the challenge. Great things lie on the other side of fear.

When Barack Obama ran for U.S president for the first time in 2008, he was, as he later admitted in his victory speech, ‘never the likeliest candidate for the office’. However, through sheer passion and determination, he rallied a divided nation behind him and urged them to believe in his dream of bringing change to America. Some doubted him, and others wrote him off. Rally after rally, day by day, he shared vision with the American people, and when he won the Democratic Primaries, history begun being reshaped. A few months later, the son of a black man from Kisumu, Kenya, became the first president of America with an African-American descent. That is testimony enough that miracles do happen if we are willing to take the necessary risks. There is nothing to gain by staying in the shadows, therefore we better risk the necessary for what we hope to achieve.

There is no glory in living below the radar for an entire lifetime. In fact, conformity will cost dearly. It is sad that years of mental conditioning by people who themselves have cowered to life have misinformed us about our potential. We have been trained on what we can and cannot do. As children, we aimed for the skies and dreamt of the stars: a child’s imagination knows no limitations. The problem is that as we grow up, we are told to be ‘realistic’, which means to trim down our dreams to size of society’s norm. This pre-programming of our minds eventually sets embargos on the reach of our aspirations. Well, now you have a choice. You can either accept what people have told you that you can and cannot do and live a safe, ‘normal’ life, or you can discredit all their predictions and reach for your true potential.

## 2: Personal Branding

### *See yourself as a Brand*

Some life coaches have undertaken to explain the idea of personal branding. Although most of the explanations are not understandable to a non-expert. I first read of this idea way back in 2013 while in form three, from a newspaper article. At the time, as a student, the making of a personal brand was of little concern to me. Two years later, I encountered the same idea again, and it is then I began thinking about it. Seven years on, I have come to understand what it really means to identify oneself as a brand, to grow it and maintain it, how to ‘sell’ oneself and the great dividends that it brings.

The simplest definition of a brand is: ‘A person’s perception of an entity’. Those in business, especially in the field of marketing, understand very well the importance of creating and growing a strong brand. Corporations spend millions of shillings each year in advertising and public relations in a bid to improve their brands. A study at Harvard Business School established that in 60 percent of the fortune-500 companies in America, the fraction of total revenue channeled to brand building is at least 10m percent higher than the actual cost of manufacturing the product. Why is this so? Can we learn something from the business arena and apply it to our lives?

Before we delve further and possibly make matters a bit more complicated, it will be useful to point out some people who have made themselves into brands that we all so know well of. They are all around us; we celebrate them, follow them on social media and ultimately we ‘buy’ them- because that is the ultimate goal of a brand. A brand has not achieved its purpose until a customer has paid money for it. Take for instance the lord of marathons in Kenya – and the world over- Eliud Kipchoge.

It is into a matter of commoditizing your worth, but creating you that is not only valuable to the world, but also consistent enough that when see you, they see ‘package’ that they can trust, and depend upon. You will not have achieved true greatness until what you do and who you are coalesce into one, and become predictable. At that stage, people will pay money for you.

This is not just for wannabe celebrities but for all those who hope to leave an indelible mark in our world.

The entire subject of personal branding is so broad, it would make a books, even volumes, by its own. And it is as racial as it is broad.

It will suffice at this point to take brief look into how our brains process ‘reality’ and ‘perception’, if we are to grasp properly the idea of a personal brand. According to psychologists, reality is quite subjective. This means that one person’s interpretation of an event or a situation varies from those of others around them. That is where ‘perception’ comes in. By using our senses, ad our minds that are very prone to error and inaccurate approximations, we are

constantly trying to make sense of all the data we receive from the external environment. Therefore, the mind is in essence just sitting around waiting to receive data (which comes in every second we are conscious) and trying to reconstruct that data based on previous experience and acquired knowledge so as to make judgment. This leads to the often debated conclusion that there is no absolute reality- everyone interprets the world uniquely.

Take for example, there is a CEO, sitting in the office. Through the door walk a neatly dressed gentleman, suit, tie and all-spick and span. He politely greets the executive and is offend a chair.

What ‘perception’ of this man do you think that the CEO is going to have?

Next walks in another gentleman. He looks different, way different from the first. Dressed in a pair of rugged jeans, a t-shirt, foodie and dreadlocks to top it up. Both have come in for a job interview. Considering that this is not a record label company, what would the executive think of the two men?

### **Rules of brand creation**

- a) Human beings are by default not rational
- b) People are desperate to believe something
- c) People dislike uncertainty

Let us discuss each of these in detail.

#### **a) Human beings are not rational by nature**

This may seem as a not so nice sentiment to describe the human intellect, but is a fact nevertheless. We all tend to rely on emotion in making decisions, even critical decisions, than we do rely on truth and logic. It is much easier to get a person to take a certain action by appealing to their emotions than it is by trying to make them see the logic of the action. We are largely emotion-driven rather than logic-driven beings. In this case, ‘emotion’ is an umbrella term for any psychological process that does not involve logic and conscious, reasoned out decision making such as love, fear, hate etc.

How do we decide whether we like someone the first time we meet them? Surely we do not ask for a history of all the bad and good they have done in the past so as to make a judgment about them. On the contrary, it is the brightness of their smile, the fanciness of their clothes and the humor in their words that conjure certain emotions in us, causing us to either like or dislike them. So have wayward people been accepted and righteous men rejected. It all boils down to branding.

So often in life do we find ourselves in situations where the strength of our accomplishments and the achievements of our past does not matter- what matters is our presentation. That is why it is important to learn to dress appropriately and communicate decently.

It is useless to put ourselves down by self-judgment. We often look at ourselves critically and enumerate the reasons why we think we cannot make it at a certain task. Well, good news for you. The people you are worried that will turn you down are not even looking at the facts. You only need to make them 'feel' something –pride, love, fear- and you have your way. Can you do that? Then you are on your way to becoming a brand.

There are people who lose their self-esteem and sense of self-worth as a result of very strict self-criticism and over thinking. What will they say if I wear this dress? Is my face good looking enough? Are my beeps showing as theirs? Well, those people are not van thinking about any of that stuff. Instead of killing yourself with self-pity, get that body you are so insecure about into that dress, walk straight into the office and greet everyone with a smile. Do whatever you do with confidence. Show them what you want them to see, not the insecurity that your mind is screaming at you. Before long, they will begin to see that and love it, because they have no option anyway. Because of how you make them feel. And also how you feel about yourself. Do it again and again until they can predict it. That way, you make yourself into a brand, an irresistible brand.

#### b) People are desperate to believe something. Anything.

Most of the time that we feel inadequate; it is because we think that people think the same about us. Or we are afraid that they know our shortcomings and those they are going to use them to put us down.

Here is a shocker for you - they have no clue about you at all! They are just waiting for you to tell them the story that they should believe. Any story. About yourself.

The day you realize that other people are as clueless as you are, you will be liberated.

It is a natural human instinct to feel insufficient and less qualified than other people. If you come to think of it, it is actually a good thing. It makes us strive to beat our insufficiencies, which is ultimately a crucial part of survival. The important thing is to ensure that this does not get in our way of our performance and abuse us to remain in our shells.

Pause for a minute think of this: you have the power to define who you are, and people have no choice but to believe it. No one can change that. People are desperate for you to tell them the story of your life so that they can believe it. Make use of this power and become a brand- one that people will be willing to pay for.

#### c) People dislike uncertainty

Or otherwise put, people want, and crave consistency. Consistency sells more than affordability and convenience.

Take for instance two of the largest telecommunication companies in Kenya, Safaricom and Airtel. The former holds about 70% of the mobile subscriber market in the country, and Airtel about 10%. What's surprising is that the call rates and data charges of the two differ in quite an interesting way. For every minute of call time, Safaricom charges Ksh 4, while Airtel charges only Ksh. 2 per minute. There is actually a subscription for free Airtel-to-Airtel calls, but none for Safaricom. The same goes for data charges. The question that begs an answer is, if Airtel is clearly cheaper and more affordable than Safaricom, why do 70% of Kenyan mobile users prefer the latter. There are many reasons that could be given for this, but there is one that I believe reveals an interesting side of human nature; one that all aspiring brands, personal or otherwise, must be aware of.

For the five years I have owned a Safaricom line, I have never experienced any service downtime or delay, let alone the fear that I may be disconnected at any time. I also own an Airtel sim card, and one of my worries is that I may not be able to use it when I go upcountry due to lack of connection. In other words, I have grown to *trust* Safaricom because I am *certain* that service is *guaranteed*. While Airtel connectivity comes with *uncertainties*. My instincts overlook the monetary differences and go for certainty.

In order to successfully brand yourself, people must trust you. Predictability is the cornerstone of all branding. If people are unsure of the nature of your next decision, how your mood will be tomorrow morning, or how you will respond to them when they approach you, they will stay away from you and what you may offer them. Learn to give people a sense of security in knowing that they can trust you while also maintaining your air of subtle mystery.

Learn to sell yourself. Your skills and talents will mean nothing if you do not find the best opportunities and environment to put them to work.

In his book *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, Robert Kiyosaki tells of his encounter with a young journalist who was aspiring to become an author. She confided in Robert that after reading his books, she saw that it was clear she was a better writer than he is which he confirmed to be true. She then asked him why then his books sold more copies than hers did. 'You are a best-selling author and I'm not', she lamented, 'yet I am a much better author than you!' To which he replied, 'you are absolutely right. I am a best-selling author, but you are a *best-writing* author. The difference between us is that I know how to sell my talent, and you don't.

Remember, people do not simply buy what is quality; they buy what they are convinced to buy, what they believe, what makes them feel something. People buy brands.



### Brands must deliver

A company that spends millions advertising its products but ends up manufacturing poor quality is doomed. The customer finding what was promised is not what was delivered will be frustrated and lead to a complete loss of trust. The strength of a brand is not just in the marketing but in its ability to deliver what was promised.

In creating a personal brand, be careful not to fall in the trap of overpromising and under delivering. There are circumstances where this strategy might work quite well, especially in politics. However, if you write a check for your character that you cannot cash, you will come off as a pretender. Personal branding should therefore not be an activity in isolation but must be done alongside personal development.

We will not delve into the broad topic of personal development at this point, since the rest of this book is basically about that. It is however worth noting that personal development without personal branding will make very fine and talented people to remain at the same position in life.

Personal development will make a better person, personal branding will tell others of your value.

Remember, it is not excellent products that sell. It is brands that sell. People don't buy quality, they buy brands. Not all brands are of the best quality, but they are bought either way.

There is need to improve your quality before you put your brand out there. Refine your character, sharpen your skills. The aim should be to under promise and over deliver. Let your work and results speak louder than your brand. The contrary is called egotistic.

As a young person, what do people think of the moment you walk into a room? Remember that it is your duty to write the narrative of your life. Make a deliberate effort to write it well and beautifully.

Controversial as it may seem, *looks do actually matter*. Big time. People will judge you according to how you dress. To put it otherwise, you will be addressed according to the way you are dressed. This is one of the basic tenets of personal branding. You may think, well, that's unfair, because what matters is who I am on the inside. People ought to judge me based on my character and intellect. Well, the bitter truth is that they will not, and they are not to blame.

It all boils down to how our brains work. At the instant you meet someone for the first time, say at a job interview or a party, your brain has zero information about them. You have not yet heard their *narrative*; therefore your natural instincts are desperate to have something to believe about the person, in order to make sense of them. The brain then turns to our senses for help.

Remember, the senses send information to the brain, not as it is in reality, but as it is 'perceived' to be. How is the person dressed? Check. Do they 'seem' friendly or hostile? In other words, is there a smile on their face? Check. Does he look rich? What brand of suit is he in, how expensive is the jewelry they are wearing? Check. Oh he/she has the same hairstyle as me; we must be alike

in many ways. Wait that deep scar on his scalp. Maybe he is a thug; I need to be careful. All this processing in the first few seconds after meeting someone. After that, you get the feeling that you are familiar with the person, when all you really have is the narrative they wanted you to see. The person has successfully sold themselves to you. They are now a brand, and you a convinced buyer.

That is why it is quite important to dress well and appropriately. Dress to pass a message- the message you want people to have about you. It is part of your narrative, your brand. 'Hey look at me in this decent suit and clean polished shoes. That tells you that I am a responsible person. My dressing reflects my discipline and work ethic. You should give me this job'. Or 'Hey yak, don't mind my way of cladding. My sagging trousers tell you how loose my discipline is. I have not buttoned my shirt but don't mind about it. I am not that decent upstairs too. Enough said. Hire me at your own risk'. I am not saying all people should wear suits. Just take care of your unspoken narrative.

All that you do is ultimately shaping your brand, whether consciously or not.

### 3. Maximize on Talent

*“And he gave each one talents according to his ability...” – the gospel of Luke*

Each one of us is endowed with unique abilities that if put to use will bring untold dividends to our lives. The creator has endowed us in diverse ways so that none of us has an excuse for staying poor all their life. This is quite a liberating idea if you come to think of it. Knowing that there is one thing that you can do exceptionally well because it is essentially a part of you. Everyone is born with a talent(s). All there is to do is to discover it, then develop it.

The process of discovering talent is like a treasure hunter who discovers diamonds buried deep in the ground. The discovery alone is not the end, but the beginning of the journey to riches. Diamonds are normally contained in other sedimentary rock. In fact, for every one tone of rock debris quarried, only several hundred milligrams of diamonds exist. Much more work has to be put in separating the diamond from the rock and dirt.

There is no doubt that enormous potential lies within each one of us. Before discovering talent, it is as good as non-existent. Even though you may unconsciously perform well in the area of that talent, you will not take the initiative to improve it, since you do not know of it in the first place. Discovery of our latent talents must be a life-long endeavor.

Following the discovery of talent is a deliberate effort to nurture it and give it an opportunity to grow. In that way, your talent will bear fruit and ultimately change your life.

Proverbs

See a man skilled in his work? He will dine with kings.

This idea comes off as very simple and straightforward, but the fact that very many people live and die without ever discovered and used their talents is worrying. One thing is true- people innately want to excel. They want to use whatever abilities they have to make their lives better. There are three major hindrances to talent: Poor parenting, the education system and fear.

#### a) Poor parenting

A child's first teacher is its parent. Right from birth, the child begins observing what the parents are doing as its mind, like a sponge in water, sucks it all in. As the child grows, the environment from which it learns expands, and with the passing of years the child slowly but surely forms a personal world view- a conceptual understanding of the world and how things are. The parent still remains an important authority in this process.

A wise parent sets the child on a path to self-discovery and equips him/her with the necessary skills and attitudes to dare to exploit potential.

There is no greater gift to child than that of a parent with this understanding. Many dreams are choked in early childhood at the hands of poor parenting. The parent may have the right intentions but end up making mistakes whose consequences will stay with the child for a lifetime.

Parents ought to instill in the child a sense of confidence in him/her. That self-belief alone is vital to enable the child to face the risks and hurdles in life. The child learns that failure can't and shouldn't define them and that it is simply a part of the journey. A human being who sees failure as a friend rather than a foe has already won half the battle.

The process of discovering talent involves risks that the child must be prepared to face. It is one failure after another that eventually leads to success. It is the parent's duty to see to it that this is done

## **b) Education System**

I personally believe that the formal education system is one of the worst inventions of humanity. It is a system that takes in brilliant minds and systematically programs them by means of a curriculum to churn out human bots who neither have the enjoyment of passion or the pursuit of fulfilment. A system that only teaches them to submit to employers and only think on what is allowed. We are not trained to actualize our potential and to hone talent, but we are being made just enlightened enough to be employable.

Well, I have nothing against education. However, the system is broken. Take university education for instance. The first university was Plato's academy, established in Greece in 56 B.C. At a time when men believed the earth was flat and the center of the universe, people prayed to Venus, and died of plagues by the drones. This same system is used in our universities today, in an era when man has landed on the moon and explored the edges of the cosmos, sending information across the globe in the blink of an eye. The game has changed but the rules have remained the same.

There are men who have gone through the same system and proceeded to change the world as we know it. But they had a different mentality. They went realized early on the loopholes in the system and went on to do something to avoid them. They took whatever they could from the system but never allowed it to imprison them with the vague promise of 'freedom'. The real freedom lay in them discovering their latent abilities and developing them.

A good percentage of graduates today are working in careers that they did not train for, or which are not in line with their talents, and therefore risk living frustrated all their lives. In this part of the world, it seems, the chief determinant of a professional path is not passion and talent nu the grade that one scores in final exams.

So, are we doomed by the system? No. We can make a choice to be in it, but not caged by it. Pursue your ambitions. In chapter we discuss how to beat the education system at its own game.

### c) **Fear**

While the previous two are external, this is internal, and can only be bred, and fought, by the individual.

Fear more often than not manifests as self-doubt. It is a notion we have about ourselves that is neither founded nor true. Very strict self-criticism, or low self-esteem contribute to this feeling of insufficiency. The fact is, whether you believe you can, or you believe you cannot, you are right either way - and no one can do anything about it.

You have to be always alive to the fact that there are immense abilities hidden deep within you. Remind yourself that every time you face challenges that seem to throw you off course. Be bold. It does not mean that you will never feel afraid, for how can we show courage if fear is non-existent? True courage is staying grounded even when we are afraid.

There is a commonly held myth about talent. If you ask most people to name a list of talents, such names as music, sport and leadership will pop up. That is a very narrow understanding of talent, and could make us to fail to realize and exploit other talents.

A talent is any natural endowment that gives you an edge in a given area.

In his best-selling book *Gifted Hands*, American neuro-surgeon Dr. Ben Carson tells of what truly made him a master of the scalpel. Aside from his obvious brilliance, he discovered that he has a gift for eye-hand coordination, which comes in handy when performing delicate surgeries that require precision to the fraction of a millimeter. By developing his eye-hand coordination, Dr. Carson has become an icon in his field. He spends hours each day sharpening this talent each day at a pool table.

Some of the truest talents are often those that you cannot put a name on. You simply know that you can accomplish a certain task very well without appearing to try hard, but you just don't have a name for that ability. That right there is a talent that can be maximized upon. Get to work on it, sharpen it and it shall pay.

There is also another issue. What if, say, you have trained to become a lawyer since you are good at building coherent arguments, but you are also gifted at writing? Well, be a lawyer during the day and write stories the rest of the time. Attend to our day job from 8 to five p.m., then work on your talent thereafter.

## 4. Have fun

*“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”*

Seriously. Sometimes you have to drop that all-series façade and get out there and have some fun. Yes, there are crazy deadlines to meet, goals to reach and serious matters to attend to. But first you need to do a simple yet important thing – attend to yourself.

We live in a crazy fast-paced world. Everything and everyone seems too been a hurry. It's as if we all left late. Students are overwhelmed by assignments, parents are very busy with the kids, and CEOs are busy running the corporate octopus, managers trying to make their financial books to balance. Everyone's cup is filled to the brim.

The little remaining time we have left is spent gazing at screens and scrolling down social media feeds. We are constantly plugged into our little pleasure points- our smart phones, laptops, and television sets. Following people we have never met and liking posts to please our friends or posting pictures for the adrenaline rush. We are on WhatsApp viewing statuses while we sink deeper into self-worry thinking how miserable our lives must be compared to the glamorous ones we see on Instagram. We are busy doing nothing much in these artificial prisons. And that's our definition of fun.

Well, why not try something different. Switch off the gadgets, go out of the house and have some real fun- and hike, an afternoon at the beach, a stroll on the grass?

We often underestimate how taking our lives little less serious and make our years more worthwhile. I have personally been a victim of this. Growing up, I caught the perfectionist bug, and it did bite real hard. My life was defined on the lines of 'perfect' grades, 'perfect' behavior, 'perfect' everything. Anything short of perfect was, according to me, a catastrophe. Little did I know that I was missing on the essence of life itself?

I love history. If there is one thing I have learnt from it, it is the sheer magnitude of the human story. Man has been around for axons and axons of time. We who are alive today are not the first ones to be here. Many have gone before us and many more will come after we are gone.

Before you were born, the cosmos was running fine and well, and it will not blow up after you have left. We are just threads in the large fabric that is human history. Therefore, taking a little break and actually enjoying life will definitely not hurt. To put it more blatantly, the pleat does not spin on your shoulders- so take a break.

A story is told of a dying man, who, on his deathbed, was asked what he cherishes most about the life he had lived. With a tired look in his dimming eyes, he said that those moments he spent with family and friends, doing nothing more than enjoying life is the ones that lingered on his

memory with him greatest joy. In those final minutes when the life is leaving us and the embers of our soul are flickering into darkness, the wealth, fame, and accolades will matter less.

Most young people do not need a lecture on how to have fun. To many of them, YOLO (you only live once) is their life's slogan and always stay true to it. Intoxicated by life itself, they know just where to fish for fun. And they always find it. Lots of it. Campus life is particularly outstanding in this regard. What's saddening though is that we have somehow crossed the thin line between fun and irresponsibility. All things must be done in moderation, remember. Choices have consequences.

## 5: Matters of the Heart: Love and Relationships.

*“Kipendacho roho ni dawa” – Swahili proverb*

They say that the heart wants what it wants. But as far as the wants of the heart go, it is without doubt that we are living in very strange times.

When in the twenties, hormones are really boiling hot as young men and women prepare to settle down in marriage. The dating game is taken a notch higher, each one looking for a suitable mate to settle down with. It's not always about settling down, however. A good number are just in it for the fun and thrill of the game. Others want the sex. More often than not, these goals mismatch leading to broken hearts.

Dating is quite the buzz among twenty-somethings. People want to fall in love and fulfil their childhood dreams of meeting their angel knight in shining armor who stoops down to save a damsel in distress. Furthermore, movies and soap operas have fed our romantic fantasies the more. (Bollywood movies are particularly exaggerative in this regard).

It is cool to be seeing someone, and strange not to. Most people bend to the pressure and get into relationships for the wrong reasons and unprepared. Tales of love stories that ended bitterly with homicides or suicides are common. The dreams of a happily ever after come crashing down and take a precious life with them.

Unmeditated romantic involvement and sexual indulgence can cause one to miss their destiny. There is nothing more destructive than sex when misused, and yet most young people seem to have wetted their appetites.

When all is said, it remains a fact that poor handling of romantic relations is a sin before God. It is He who made human beings to love- but He designed the institution of marriage for the expression of romantic love. Any other ideology is man's invention and it is sin. Remember, God made man simple but he has made himself complicated.

Inside every man and woman is a strong desire to be loved and appreciated, and to give love too. The attraction we experience towards the opposite sex may however be lust, infatuation or true love. Our minds are particularly poor at differentiating between the three, and there lies a big pitfall.

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, morals have particularly been redefined, and the once clear lines between what is right, what is wrong and what is permissible have been blurred. Everything seems okay, as long as it makes the individual to feel 'good'.

A culture of self-centeredness and self-seeking attitudes has deeply permeated the 21<sup>st</sup>-century society. A 'me-first' mentality that has covered people- especially young people- like a



menacing dark cloud. It is a time when the concern is for me, myself and I – a selfishness that is costing us dearly. People making decisions only based on the benefits it will bring them, and giving no thought to the feelings of other people. That's why society has become shamelessly corrupt and impunity has poisoned our political circles. People chasing their own desires even if it leaves a mess behind them. A truly man-eat-man society.

It is this 'me-first' mentality that has affected our social fabric and sense of morality. The logic is that, as long as it 'feels' good for me *at the moment*, it does not matter what effect it may have in the future- I want it *now*. Or when I am done with this relationship, I just walk away- the other partner can sort themselves. Other people's feelings do not matter to me as long as I have my way. This has resulted in valuing things over people and putting a price tag on stuff that's priceless.

This is the malady that ails our relationships, and not until we deal with this sense of selfishness, we will continue to chase love but it will remain just a fantasy. A 'we' mentality is urgently needed.

The media and popular culture have played a big role in teaching and promoting these self-centered ideologies. Even popular songs that are meant to be love songs often deny the very essence of love- unconditional and selfless.

There is one more reason why relationships are failing, which I term the ATM complex – a 'get-it-now' mentality. Most young people want things now, and if not now then they must have them right now. Just like an automated teller machine where one presses a button and cash is dispensed instantaneously they seem to want to apply the same to relationships.

This kind of thinking is attributable to the kind of 21<sup>st</sup> century world that we live in, where technology and scientific breakthroughs have made almost every service instant. Want a cab? No problem. Just launch an app and book one. Need food? Easy. Order it online and it will be delivered to your doorstep in not time. Would like to watch a movie? Easy peasy. You do not have to go to the theatres; just stream it online, and internet speeds are insanely fast. Information is being sent around the globe in seconds. Anything that one needs, just tap a button or a swipe a screen and you get instantly. With dating sites, it has never been easier to hook up without having to practice the nuances of social life. We have severely lost our patience.

The problem is that some things cannot be got instantly. Love does not come in an instant, it is groomed with time and grows slowly. A successful marriage is not built in a day, a month or even a year. Wealth is grown slowly and consistently, yet most people dream of getting rich fast and quick. These things cannot be hurried. They take time. Yet we want them at the snap of a finger, and that is where we fail.

## 6: Do not listen to people

*Not literally, though.*

At 21, I have realized that I have the sole responsibility and make the last decision of how my life will turn out. And I do not mean that one should be cocky and refuse to take any advice from people who seek to offer it. Take in all the advice that you possibly can, however, remember that you make the final choice, and whatever you decide upon you will stand to reap the rewards or suffer the consequences that follow. A person that lives his life according to what society tells him and in the process fails to pursue his personal convictions will have his own self to blame if his life turns out to be miserable. That applies even to our parents. Yes, they want the best for us, and yes, they will point us in the direction that they are convinced will lead us to a good ending. But sometimes what worked for them in years past may not work for you in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, where the rules have changed greatly. That has been a lesson I have learnt, that:

***You hold the last decision in how your life will turn out. Do not let dogma hinder you from pursuing your personal dreams and ambitions. In other words, do not listen to people, and not literally.***

No one articulated this idea better than the late Apple boss Steve Jobs, in his 2005 commencement speech to the graduates of Stanford University. I read that speech a while ago and its magnificent words have stuck on my mind like glue. Whenever I am about to give up my ambitions because of the belief system that society seeks to impose on me whether deliberately or subconsciously, I remember Job's words on that day:

*Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.*

The key to this lesson is learning to think for yourself. That sounds unbelievably simple, but when looked at closely, we realize that many of us seldom think. I do not refer to the passive everyday presence of thought in the mind, but the deep, focused and critical thinking about issues that leads to the discovery of new ways of solving problems. In this intensive state of thought, we began to discover ourselves and unearth salient beliefs that had been buried deep in our subconscious which influence our decision making without our notice. It is a process akin to ploughing a piece of land prior to farming. A farmer has to employ the best ploughs there is to turn the soil and bring up the nutrients that had seeped their way deep into the soil. This kind of thinking is a conscious rumination on mental curd, in order to understand ourselves.

Most of us millennials are lazy thinkers. We are smart and talented, and we pass our examinations well, but we never think for ourselves. We have let the internet, and more so social media, to think

for us. We wake up each day and adopt the result of other people's thinking then try to adapt it to our lives. We binge watch movies and television series, scroll down Instagram timelines, letting our minds absorb other peoples' trends, fashion styles and ideologies. We lie to ourselves that that's the way life should be. In the process, we have transferred to people we do not know the most valuable of our gifts, the ability to create and dictate the reality of our own lives. Hence we live in an 'artificial' reality that's hugely unauthentic, copy pasting peoples' opinions onto our lives.

The human brain is the most magnificent structure that the Creator made. Neuroscientists have attested that despite great leaps made in brain research since the dawn of the millennium, we only know about 20% of the potential of the human brain. Endowed with billions of neurons and cells, it is second to no supercomputer made by man, no matter how powerful. From the moment we are born, the brain begins receiving signals from the environment and forming conceptual models of the world around us. Everyone lives in their own subjective reality that is created by their unique brain activity in receiving information from the environment and interpreting it. Nothing escapes the human mind, even that which we do not remember consciously. Even the minute and mundane details of everyday life are buried somewhere deep inside your brain. The color of the shirt that you wore fifteen years ago on the twelfth day of March, the name of the stranger you met in a bus ten years ago, the number of artefacts you saw in a museum during a class visit four years ago, what you had for dinner ninety days ago – all this information is stored in your brain, and you do not even know it consciously! What a wonderful organ we have. But that is the good news. The rather uncomfortable news is that any unhealthy information that you consume on a daily basis is also stored in your brain. The violence in movies, all the stuff on social media, and every single word you hear – it lies there in your subconscious, quietly but ultimately affecting your decision making. That is why it is said 'As a man thicket in *his heart*, so is he' - the heart is a metaphor for the subconscious mind. Therefore it does matter a lot what you are actively thinking about- it is the material in your memory that you are not even aware that it exists which is constantly defining you. Deal with that and you will change your life.

Are we therefore helpless beings under the massive potential of our powerful brains? In a more sinister perspective, are we slave of our minds? The simple answer is yes and no. Yes because, well, you are what you think. And no because you can control your thoughts. You can determine what your subconscious self ruminates over behind the scenes, by choosing the material you feed it with. That is why it is important to mind what you see and hear.

## 7: The Internet

We live in the Information Age. This a time when information is the currency of value in the world. The internet has democratized access to information; today you have the world's information at your fingertips in the form of a smartphone. With the click of a button, a screen opens up new worlds and connects you distant continents. Information is flying across the globe every microsecond at the speed of light. The world is connected than never before. Come to think of it, we are privileged to live in the most amazing times in the entire human history. We do not have to fight with bullets and bombs to prove military might, the battles of today are fought through intelligence. The more informed a country or person is, the more powerful they are. Someone stated that the battles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not fought with swords and spears but are fought in the mind. At 21, I have learnt the power and potential and potential of the internet. I urge you, if you have not discovered the potential and importance of this amazing invention of man, make a decision to do so. I will help you get started by the end of this chapter.

## 8: Life will punch you below the belt.

*You better be ready.*

In my life, I have heard the ubiquitous phrase ‘Life is not fair’ more times than I care to count. Even when I was a child, I heard it so often among adults that I started thinking to myself that adult people must be very pessimistic. I said to myself that these people must be too lazy to work for the results that they desire to see in life, and when they failed to reach those goals and saw other people attaining them, then they resulted to pacifying themselves with the ‘life is unfair’ mantra. Some good man would die and leave people we perceived as evil to continue hurting innocent human beings and the infamous quote would be invoked, ‘life is unfair’. A corrupt politician would be seen amassing more and more wealth from public coffers, while a poor man of unquestionable integrity wallows deeper and deeper into stinking poverty, and the hares would go into peoples’ mouths , ‘life is unfair’. So I grew up knowing that life is unfair, but wondering how actually that was possible. I have been lucky to be born in a background of stable earnings, and therefore the unfairness of life, whatever it was, did not hit me at an early age.

I am now twenty one years, and an adult. By the way, I don’t know if you have noticed this. When you are a child, people in their twenties are adults to you. But once you hit twenty yourself, you do not feel like an adult to yourself, but your young nephews see you as that bearded uncle. You never get old to self.

Throughout the last four years, I have come to learn the meaning of life being unfair. The adults I heard mention the phrase a long time ago as a child were right, they just did not seem to put it in the right way. Unfair, means lacking justice. Like when the judge is unfair, then his judgements are tilted towards one party in an unjust manner. Likewise if a system is unfair, it prefers a given section of the population over another, for any other justification rather than merit. Therefore a person, a system, or an entity can exercise the vice of unfairness. In that light, it is both logically and grammatically incorrect to say that ‘Life is unfair’, and philosophically too. To put it more clearly, I like to say,

***One way or another, life will hit you below the belt.***

Being a man, and one who has gone through the primary school initiation into manhood that is prearranged closing day boxing bouts on the way home, I think I perfectly understand the literal connotation of the phrase ‘hit below the belt’. I had worn no belt on the day I learned the painful lesson, because I did not own one until I went to boarding school (My mother had the super power of buying shorts that fit me to the inch), but anyway I was hit at the area that would have been below a belt, at the front.

I was class five, the year was 2006. Those days was of a tiny body. Some people still think I am short for my age, but those days I was the minion version of short. However, what I lacked in physical built I made up for in academic work. I aced most of my exams and topped the class severally in a year. I would have been a constant toper were it not for other two girls, Mercy and Faith, who had the brains that made a man's ego angry. They always had a way to outsmart me, and I pacified my ego by telling myself that I was in competition with no one but myself, knowing all too well that they were reason I missed several hours of precious sleep each week. So on this particular day, I crossed paths with a fellow classmate, whose name I will not mention because my groin still remembers the ordeal I took it through, and fears that mentioning his name here would welcome a similar situation. As always, fighting in school was highly discouraged, and it warranted a serious thrashing from the head teacher when caught (The one who lost the fight was the one more severely punished, because in most cases he was the one who began the fight. I personally thought it was a punishment for being weak and losing). To avoid the punishments, all fights were scheduled to take place on the school closing day, on an agreed upon time and venue. Ours was a day school, therefore we had plenty of time to ourselves on our way home on the day of closing school.

Therefore, a pupil would have to wait for weeks in order to prove to his colleague who was manlier than the other. In my case, it was two weeks. To be honest, I had no particular grudge with my grudge mate. I had only watched many bouts and I missed to feel the thrill of punching someone in the face as I saw other pupils do. (Disclaimer: Violence is discouraged by the author. Do not try this at home or school). I had learnt that it would be more enjoyable if I felt real anger towards my opponent. Therefore, for those brief weeks prior to Boxing Day, I found reasons to be angry at him. Like eating his food without his permission so that he would report to the teacher and I would be punished and then I blame it on him. Stupid things like that.

Long story short, the day came, and I was beaten without mercy. I thought I had prepared enough; press ups every night, punches in the air over break time; but it turned out my opponent was a natural talent. The climax of the bout was a scissors kick I got in my groin that sent me home to mama limping. I had learned an important lesson.

## 9: The Power of Associations

*“As Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”*

Our conscious role in choosing the kind of people that we become goes only that far, and the greatest influence to our character, and ultimately our destinies, is the kind of people that we choose to keep around us. The associations that we involve ourselves with tend to rub off attitudes, thoughts and habits onto us, and the more time we spent around certain kinds of people, the more we become like them. It is an unwritten law of human associations that we sooner or later take after the company that we choose to keep.

To find a person who is serious about their destiny, look for the person who is very selective when it comes to forming friendships. These people understand that one needs to qualify to become their friends. By applying a given set of standards that they have determined will propel them to their desired destiny, they vet the people they meet before they can allow them a space in their inner circle. Only those who are found to be going in the right direction and possessing the required attitudes and ideals are given a pass of friendship. Furthermore, they are constantly auditing their inner circles so as to identify anyone who might be poisoning their internal ecosystem and uproot them if found. It is not surprising that this caliber of people often have very few friends – but they care the least about that – because they understand only too well that the road to destiny is narrow and the journey cannot be made by crowds hanging around them. This is not pride, it is wisdom.

There are five types of people: The tellers, the takers, the anchors, the pillars and the conformers.

### The Tellers

This group of people always have news to tell, the problem is that they tell for the sake of talking. They won't tell you of anything of consequence though; they always have the latest gossip in town, and they like telling you about other people.

Stay away from tellers, for whoever tells you about other people will definitely tell other people about you.

### The Takers

There are people who always seem to need something from you but will never have something to offer in return. They are lazy individuals who according to them, it is their right to be helped but they will never be in a position to help. They will suck you dry until you drop dead and then dump you and go on to greener pastures. Stay away from them.

### The Anchors.

These people will hold you stable when the storms blow hard on you, but they never show it off. They are there, silently keeping you afloat and helping you out whenever you need them. They will let sacrifice everything to keep you afloat, and when the worst comes to the worst and you sink, they will go down with you. Some of them are angels in human bodies, and they are called parents. These people are rare to find, so if you find any, keep them close.

### **The Pillars**

They are similar to the anchors, but different in that they will always demand credit for helping you. Everyone has to know that it is them that kept you safe and pulled you out of that problem. They will keep you standing, but to do so they have to be towering above you, and in case they fall, they will come tumbling on you. If you have them in your life, keep them close but keep your eyes open.

### **The conformers**

There are people who can dissolve into any environment and you will not be able to find them. Conformers can walk into any room and immediately get swallowed up in the atmosphere. No one will notice when they come in and neither will their absence be felt. They have a problem with standing out.

They never complain about anything and neither do they complement anyone. They have an extraordinary ability to be okay with whatever is offered. They don't fight. They are avert to rejections. Like caterpillars, they camouflage into whatever environment they are in. They believe they have no voice of their own, and even if they do, no one cares to listen to them. Like sheep, they always follow from behind. They are always faces in the crowd. They are not bad people, and neither do they do much good.

And when they eventually leave the world, no one notices it. They added little of value to the world, if any, and they took nothing out of it. The world owes them nothing. Therefore they leave as quietly as they came.

### **The shakers.**

If you have been in the eye of a whirlwind, you may understand what type of people these are.

They know they are here for a reason, and they know that reason well.

They know no obstacles; they either find a way around the mountain or die trying.

They know the value of their time, and understand that time is limited.

They are the people we celebrate.



When they are gone, the world must take notice, and appreciate that a game – changer has rested.

Keep around you people who inspire you to be more than you ever thought you could be. You have a choice to make when it comes to the friends you keep: Friendships do not just happen – they are made. Have in your circle people who fan the fire inside of you and not those who drain your energy and passion with their negativity.

Before you can demand that type of friends, you have to be that type of person yourself. Do not be a taker – be someone people can depend upon and learn from. Be the kind of a friend you would want to have, and the right kind of people will gravitate towards you. And never be afraid to be different in life. At times, if you want to be exceptionally successful, you will have to embrace solitude, because it is never crowded at the top.

## 10: Lessons on Patience

*"Rome was never built in a Day"*

One can only achieve greatness if they do the right thing consistently over a long period of time. You will never get there with one stroke, but with another, and another, and another, you will begin to create something so beautiful than you think is possible. We need to learn the habit of patience. To understand that one does not eat the fruit on the same day that they plant the tree. There is a process.

The game of life is not finite but infinite. The goal should not be to just win, but to stay in the game for as long and sustainably as is possible. The best things in life are developed slowly, they need to be given time to grow roots and develop a solid foundation. The journey will be slow and painful, and only the most determined will be willing to hold it out to the end. Anyone one can begin it, but it is only those who have commitment who will be willing to trust the process, bearing the challenges it brings and holding it out to the very last minute. It is neither the fastest nor the strongest that make it, it's the most committed.

Success is really a measure of the level of your pain threshold. For how long are you able to withstand the necessary pain and discomfort as you work your way to your goal? Because most people give up as soon as the first disappointment comes by. If you have determined that your life is going to take a certain course, never give up on that. It is your stick - ability to a certain set of goals and principles that determines your end.

To maintain your patience, you must learn to see the value of small steps. We may make huge leaps when we are feeling motivated, but what's really heroic is the ability to make the small steps when we feel tired and about to give. There are days when we feel dry and forlorn inside, the fire that burnt when the idea was conceived seems to have vanished on these days. Do we simply stop and give up, and go on long for another idea that excites us? The true measure of commitment is the decision to not listen to the voice of despair, but to look deep inside for the voice that always transcends all challenges; the indomitable hope of the human soul, and to draw on it to push us forward though the dull days. One small step at a time.

As we journey through life, seasons come when we feel like we are trekking through a desert. Times when nothing seems to be giving in despite our constant knocks. We are left asking ourselves why things are happening the way they are. We may be tempted to blame it on ourselves or on other people. It's simply a time with no results our efforts notwithstanding.

If you live life without actually expecting it to be perfect, you will seldom be disappointed. That does not imply walking around in negativity or always smelling for trouble. But there is a level of maturity you get to and you acquire a kind of inner peace in knowing that time and again, life will be hard and seemingly unfair. It does not matter how good you are or how smart and talented you may be, the world will somehow find a way to disappoint you.

Anyone can enjoy the victories in life, but the real and tough test of men and women is how they handle the bitter sections of it. How you handle failure and defeat? Does it break you and leave you sprawled on the ground, without the will to get up and soldier on? It is only those who have the will to stand, dust themselves up and face life again with a smile who eventually make meaningful impact in the world. It's not just the swift and the fastest who finish the race, but those who are able to bear it out to the very end.

Do not rank among the spineless individuals who run away after the first scare. As long as you have determined in your heart to do a certain thing, and you are absolutely sure that it is what you want, then there is no obstacle big enough to stop you. The question is not whether you will fail or not – it is whether you are willing to learn from your failures instead of letting them break you. Be soft and cool on the outside but hard and unbreakable on the inside. The power of the human soul is immense, draw on it to take you through the dark times.

The way you conduct yourself while in the valleys of life will determine how long you are going to last on the mountain tops. Use your time in the valley to prepare yourself for the climb. Be careful not to fall into the temptation of channeling the frustrations that the valley brings into habits and behaviors that will ruin you. Sometimes people will give up and turn to drunks and sexual indulgencies for solace, instead of taking the opportunity to work on themselves and polish their skills. The best time to develop yourself is the time when you are not in a position of influence and not so many people are looking, because then you can make mistakes and not be accountable to very many people. Take advantage of that opportunity.

## Epilogue

*Thank you for reading through. It is my hope that you have been inspired.*

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