

**Artistic Barbell- Create Your Own Artwork and Find
Inspiration**

How to Live the Happiest Possible Life

Dear friend,

A thought: assuming you had unlimited time, resources-- what would you do with all of your human metabolism, energy, and life?

My suggestion: Make art until you die-- and of course, to stay inspired/motivated, keep drawing from the well of the master artists of the past.

Okay, let me outline some of my thoughts and ideas.

First of all, let me talk about my position right now. I'm currently living in Saigon; and I had the realization: I will never run out of money (assuming I live below my means). I've trained myself to be able to just eat one meal a day, and all I "need" is wifi, coffee, and water.

The interesting thing about living in Saigon: I'm living in a hotel, and either walk everywhere or take a taxi/Grab. This means even if I wanted to, I couldn't spend my money on buying a house (what a lot of Americans aspire towards), and I also can't buy a car (another thing that a lot of Americans aspire towards).

Not only that, but there's no more tools I really need. I have my laptop, my camera, tablet; everything else is superfluous. I have all the digital tools I need to create what I like: photographs, poetry, videos, etc.

So at this point, having extra money doesn't really have any practical/functional purpose.

Currently my daily routine looks something like this:

- Wake up at 4-7am: Go to the park across the street, workout a bit, then go back to the hotel room, have some coffee in the room, and write a little bit.
- 7-10am: Go to a coffee shop with Cindy
- Morning-5pm: Do creative work (writing, making photos, videos, poetry, etc), then have a leisurely dinner (usually from 5-8pm).
- 8-9pm: Go back to hotel room, relax, shower, chat, count our blessings, then go to sleep

Rinse and repeat.

So -- assuming this was the 'eternal return' (the concept by Nietzsche) that this daily template was repeated for eternity-- what would I do with all of my time, energy, and metabolism?

Once again, at this point, I don't really have any more "need" for extra money, fame, followers, etc.

I have decided (for now) my focus is the following:

1. Continue to make artwork, information, or share knowledge which empowers others.
2. In order to do that, I must continue to learn from the masters who have come before me (whether they be film directors, philosophers, poets, photographers, etc)

So it is just a cyclical cycle:

Make stuff -> Find inspiration -> Make more stuff -> Find inspiration ...

Any art which inspires you is good art

So I think the biggest difficulty we have as artists and creators is to find "inspiration" or motivation to make stuff.

To be clear, the difference between inspiration and motivation is this:

1. **Inspiration:** To learn ideas from others, that give us novel ideas of our own
2. **Motivation:** To have the energy, impetus, and strength to create our own artwork

We need *both* inspiration and motivation to be prolific artists.

For **inspiration**: find inspiration anywhere and everywhere. Don't worry whether the artwork is 'high brow' or low-brow. For example, I often get really inspired/pumped up when I listen to music. I listen to mostly hip hop, rap, jazz, etc.

For example, I love Kanye West, JAY Z, Kendrick Lamar, Cyhi da Prynce, MIGOS, Eminem, etc. Regardless of what others think about them -- I don't really mind. Why? They get me pumped up, which helps me focus and do my creative work.

For **motivation**: I get 'motivation' to work by the following:

1. **Coffee/tea/cocoa:** Drinking lots of black coffee (espresso/cold brew), tea (green tea), and 100% cocoa. These are my stimulants of choice, which get me pumped up, and give me energy/focus to have the impetus to make stuff. No milk or sugar.
2. **Working out:** After a morning or afternoon workout, I usually get a good 'pump', which gives me energy, and gives me strength and power, which I channel into doing my creative work.
3. **Knowing that my work will benefit others:** If I were to do all my creative work only for myself, and never share it with others-- I wouldn't do it. To me, I get

motivation to know that the stuff I make (blog posts, photos, videos, poems, etc) can inspire/motivate/encourage/empower others-- I have an impetus to do something! My life philosophy: **If whatever I make and share can empower at least 1 other person on planet earth, it is worth doing.**

Of course often my inspiration/motivation/creative power gets weaker/wanes. I've actually discovered that things which harm/hurt me:

1. **Cold weather** (spending a winter in Europe/East Coast) was horrible for me. My theory is that when it is cold and miserable, I am less likely to walk, and therefore I feel more depressed.
2. **Lack of sunlight**: I think I'm a tree -- I need sunlight to 'photosynthesize' and have energy/power. There is usually a lack of sunlight in the winter-time. Even in the summer where the days are gloomy, I feel less energy and motivation.
3. **Lack of social contact**: I have a lot of energy and high spirits because living here in Saigon, I am constantly interacting with people (compared to my more insular lifestyle when living in the suburbs of LA). For example, when I wake up in the morning in the hotel, when I take the stairs downstairs I chat with usually 2-3 cleaning ladies. Then I chat with the 2 people at the front desk. Then at the park, I will chat with some kids/old people at the park while working out (3-4 people). I go back to the room, wake up Cindy, and by 8am I have already interacted with a dozen people! And the joy of seeing all the people working out at the Saigon park is uplifting! (Even at 4am, I can count at least 50 people working out/walking/playing badminton at the park).

Anyways, the practical solution for me is to live somewhere with warm weather (this is why I love Saigon). Of course it also rocks living here, because the cost of living is very low -- so I'm not as stressed about finances.

Anyways, I'm getting a little bit off topic. My concluding points is this to live the most happy/fulfilling/productive life possible:

1. **Get daily exercise:** Whether yoga, doing chin-ups at the park, squats or deadlifts at the gym, or just walking around.
2. **Take breaks:** When you're feeling burnt out from working during the day, just walk around the block for 15 minutes, or take a nap.
3. **Never stop finding inspiration from other master artists from the past:** whether painting, cinema, sculpture, dance, theater, music, etc. Can be contemporary masters or dead masters.
4. **Never stop making your own work:** It ain't enough to find inspiration from others from the past; you must also create! I feel we are actually happiest when we are actively creating stuff-- whether you're making poetry, videos, film, photos, etc.
5. **Never stop being social:** Humans are social animals. Interact with people who make you smile and bring you joy. Whether family, friends, or strangers. This is why street photography is so great-- you are forced to interact with others!
6. **Never stop innovating:** Don't just keep doing the same thing in your artwork. Constantly push yourself to find new ways of doing things!
7. **Study philosophy:** Study the master philosophers from the past, to find wisdom. Never stop being a student in philosophy until you die.

Lastly, never doubt yourself. Never compromise, and live everyday like it were your last (memento mori).

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