

## **Human Augmentation 2**

# Human Augmentation

Dear friend,

A philosophical idea I've been contemplating is on "human augmentation":

How can we augment ourselves (increase our physical and mental strength), *should* we augment ourselves, and what are the ramifications of human augmentation?

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## 1. Immortality

Currently the hypothetical human extent on life is around 120 years. If you look at the human size (mass), and our metabolic rate -- 120 years for a biological organism our size makes sense.

*Even if there were a magical pill that would allow "immortality" -- I would say no.*

I think philosophically there is a beauty to death. Without death, there could be no new life. Without 'disruption', innovation in technology could not happen. Without hunger there would be no delight in the taste of food. If we never felt tired, we would never enjoy the sweet fruit of sleep -- or appreciate when we have energy. Without sorrow, there is no joy. Without war there can be no peace.

Anyways, I like the idea that we can all live to be around 120 years old. I aspire to live to 120 years old with a strong physical body and a strong mind. But I think it is morally and ethically repulsive to think about living "forever". I would frankly probably get pretty bored if I were 200 years old, 300 years old, 500 years old, 1000 years old, or 50,000 years old.

Anyways -- I think as humans we should seek to live our maximum lifespan (120 years)-- instead of seeing to augment (increase) the maximum lifespan (300+ years).

### **1a. How can we live to be 120 years old?**

For now, the best empirical data we have on living to 120 years is simple ('via negativa', in the words of Nassim Taleb). Figuring out what *NOT* to eat, consume, or do will help us achieve our maximum lifespan:

- Intermittent fasting (not eating 3 square meals a day)
- Not eating sugar or simple carbohydrates
- Not smoking
- Not getting killed in a car accident, a texting-while-driving accident, etc

And the main causes of our death:

1. Our heart stops pumping blood to our brain.
2. Our blood vessels in our brain either get blocked or break.
3. Our heart muscles might die and stop pumping blood to our brain. When arteries get blocked, we cannot pump blood to our brain.
4. Stroke is when the blood vessels in our brain get blocked or rupture (break).

Anyways, some basic solutions:

1. Make sure your heart is strong, and keeps pumping blood (physical activity)
2. Avoid getting stroke (blood vessels getting blocked or ruptured in our brain)

I am very skeptical of the standard narrative that eating red meat and fat causes our blood vessels to get clogged. I am more suspicious of sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and simple carbohydrates (I'm in the Gary Taubes camp -- I recommend his book, 'Good Calories, Bad Calories').

Anyways, I'm going to move on. Basic ideas to live to be 120 years in strong mental and physical health:

1. Lift heavy stuff.
2. Don't always eat 3 square meals a day: Let yourself fast intermittently and go hungry every once in a while.

3. Walk as much as you can: Much of the human brain has evolved for biped movement (walking with your two legs). If you don't need to walk anymore-- what need do you have for a brain?
  4. Challenge your mind.
  5. Don't die from a drug overdose (stay away from hard drugs) alcohol poisoning)
  6. Don't die in a car accident (drunk or high driving, texting and driving)-- or don't get killed by a car as a pedestrian (don't walk and text message, or listen to headphones while you're walking). Also, don't ride motorcycles or bicycles.
  7. Don't have excess body fat (adipose tissue): Abstain from high fructose corn syrup and sugar.
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## 2. Mind augmentation

So what many of us are interested is mind augmentation. In other words:

*How can we use drugs and technology to become "smarter"?*

Or in more vulgar modern societal terms:

*How can I become more 'productive'?*

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### 2a. Wisdom

I think this notion of becoming 'smarter' is a bit silly. What we really want to become is wiser. Reading the newspaper everyday won't make you more wise. True wisdom comes from real-life experiences, deep thinking, curbing our own human biases and ignorance, and by studying and producing philosophy.

### 2b. Focus

The reason why a lot of people use 'nootropics' (mind-altering drugs) like coffee, adderall, Ritalin, etc is to "focus". But this is the problem with the notion of focusing:

*We should not always be focused.*

In-fact, I believe true innovative ideas come to us when we aren't focusing. My best ideas always come to me when I go on long and pointless walks in the park, without a phone in my pocket, and without headphones on. **I need to let my mind wander in order to come up with new or interesting ideas.**

As a hypothetical, if you had a human being constantly drinking coffee and popping pills of adderall -- of course the person would be very "focused" on their work, but this is the more important philosophical question:

*How do you know you're working on the right thing?*

Or,

*If humans could work 24 hours a day and never need to sleep again-- would that be desirable?*

Thus, I don't think we should always focus. We should only focus on things which are meaningful to us. And the only distractions we should remove are distractions which kill our focus on what is truly meaningful to us. Thus we must define for ourselves what is important to us, and what distract us from that -- and thus, **subtract negative distractions.**

### **2c. Devices don't make us more focused or wise**

This is the thing:

*Computers, phones, tablets, headphones, etc don't allow us to become more focused or wise.*

If anything, our devices and technology often distract us more than it helps us focus. And just buying a new iPhone won't make you more wise.

There are some technologies which help us focus. For example, listening to music with headphones in distracting coffee shops helps me focus. But then again-- the noise and the mild-chaos on the coffee shop is what helps me focus! I cannot be productive or focus when I'm alone at home, locked in a boring room by myself.

I like writing in IA WRITER -- because it subtracts all other distractions which removes me from focusing on writing.

Devices can be used to help us become wiser. For example I have read hundreds of philosophical texts on my laptop, my phone, or tablet. I love reading PDF documents or ".ePub" documents. Using technology and the internet to gain access to these philosophical texts have helped me become wiser. But the device in itself doesn't help you become more wise or focused.

If you want to truly focus more-- the less technology you use, the better.

But this is the tricky thing -- you don't want to remove *ALL* technology from your life and become some sort of Zen Buddhist monk. You want to have *some* technology in your life. You want to have tools which empower you, and help you produce. You don't want tools which distract and disempower you.

I don't think there is a perfect or an "optimal" combination of devices to maximize your focus and productivity, and reduce your distractions. But some basic ideas:

- Having a maxed-out MacBook Pro is certainly good for productivity.
- Having a smartphone (without a data or phone plan) seems to be the "optimal" device. Just use your phone when you have wifi. **Having a smartphone device is useful, but always having access to the internet is bad.**
- Having an iPad is very useful. I like having the ability to read ebooks on it, and sketch things with my finger (I am very very anti-Apple Pencil or iPad keyboard).

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### 3. Why be augmented?

The ultimate philosophical question:

*Why augment yourself?*

For myself, I want to increase and build my mental and physical strength to new levels-- in order to become stronger and wiser, in order to help those who are weaker or less fortunate than myself. I don't think this should be the answer for

everyone -- but it works for myself pretty well (so far).

Thus for myself, I am extremely selfish and self-centered; but ultimately for the greater good.

I need focus. I ruthlessly prune distractions from my life. If I want to augment my own personal mind and body, I must focus on self-preservation and self-growth. And as I learn, I share. I also lend my hand or resources whenever I can.

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## Conclusion

So friend-- ask yourself:

*When you seek to augment yourself via drugs or technology-- **why?***

What is your life purpose or mission statement in life? It doesn't have to be an ultimatum. You can change your life purpose and statement as you evolve and change. Remember, **you're always in a state of becoming**. You will never achieve a 'final form'. The constant change is what we desire!

Be bold, be brave, and be you. You were born to do epic shit my friend-- don't hold yourself back!

ERIC