

A Mindful Guide to Online Living

DITCH 9-5, DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE
AND CREATE SUSTAINABLE VALUE

André Klein

mindful \mind"ful\, a. Bearing in mind; regardful; attentive; heedful; observant

online \on"line`\, on-line \on"-line`\adj. (Computers) connected by a communications line to a computer.

Source: The Collaborative International Dictionary of English

About the Author



André Klein is a published author, music artist, co-founder of the online learning institution Learn Out Live and the netlabel Teelanovela.

He has grown up in different countries, including Thailand and Sweden and currently enjoys a location-independent lifestyle working as a language and media literacy coach with students and clients from all over the world.

Another Day in Paradise

You wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning. (In most cases, earlier)

You catch a train, bus, subway, drive your car and start work at 9. (In most cases, earlier)

You sit at a desk or run around in corridors until you leave your office at 5. (In most cases, later)

At the end of the day you are too tired to do anything else than watch TV or get drunk. When the morning comes, you start the same procedure. You do this 365 days a year, minus the few days of hastily planned vacations in places where you hardly can get a rest because so many other people like you are trying to unwind at the same time.

If that describes the way you live your life and you love it, this book is not for you.

If you feel this way of life sucks you dry like a lemon and you only do it for the money, I have good news for you: You don't have to do it! Times have changed. No matter what people tell you, you don't have to do this anymore. It's as simple as that.

In this book you are going to learn how to use the net as your *escape vehicle* and increase the following three factors in your life:

1. **FREEDOM:** Choose when to work and when to rest.
2. **CREATIVITY:** Create services or works of art that contribute value to people
3. **BEING:** Enjoy your life!

The Secret is: There are No Secrets!

If you are serious about making a living online, you have probably noticed that there are a lot of ebooks, blogs and websites out there that talk about “Making Money in Your Sleep”, “How to Get Rich Quick” and other “secrets to financial freedom”. 99,9 % percent of those publications are a pure waste of your time, for mainly two reasons:

1. They make money the central issue. This is a big problem and confuses real value with numbers on paper! (Money is *not* bad. But it is just a means, not an end.)
2. They feed on our childish belief that there is some kind of Big Secret, which of course there isn't. (Otherwise, everybody would be doing it!)

But the good news is: It is actually possible to make a living from the net in a sane way.

So, instead of a Big Secret, there is a simple truth: Making money online is only possible if we make a difference by helping others! You don't have to worry about becoming the “Next Big Thing”. Everybody can do it.

This is not rocket science. It's about finding simple ways to help, support and inspire people all over the planet and giving them a chance to return the favor.

The bottom line is this: **The more you give, the more you earn!**

There are as many ways to do this as there are individuals. In this book we will explore both common principles and practical approaches to make true change happen!

Introduction



As the years go by, more and more people are finding themselves spending more and more of their time "logged in", being filled with a sense of wonder, excitement and – well... confusion in face of the *endless possibilities* that connected computing has generated.

As technology is becoming increasingly mobile, Internet access and usage rises proportionally.

Nowadays, it is almost impossible *not* to be influenced by the Net, even in its most marginal sense. It is in our homes, hospitals, banks and yes - even in our pockets.

The famous science fiction author William Gibson who coined the word “cyberspace” let one of his characters in his recent book *Spook Country* make the point that, in fact, the Net is not outside of us anymore but **we have become an integral part of it.**

The naked human eye cannot perceive radio signals. We do not see the waves emitted by our mobile phones and WiFi adapters. If we could, we would be seeing a stream of data all around us. Even our social lives and workplace situations are registered as flows

of data in an ever-expanding interconnected network. Whether we like it or not:

We have – in short – become part of the *cloud*.

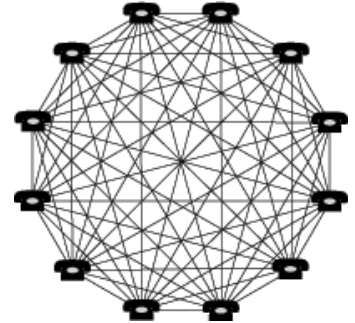
It is only obvious that this ubiquitous presence of the Net has very far-reaching consequences on our behavior, thoughts and life as we know it.

This book is an exploration of those consequences and how we can find a better integration between the *virtual* and the *real world* in practical terms.

In the following chapters you are going to see how the *Net* is shaping our social relations and how we can use those connections more successfully in order to make a living online, to get out of old habits, imprisoning work situations and into a more sustainable lifestyle both for ourselves and our planet and civilization as a whole.

Also, you will find here practical exercises for increasing mindfulness while working with machines, how to limit distractions and reach maximum productivity.

So whether you see yourself as a “digital native” or occasional *user*, this book will let you see technology you are already using in a new light and hopefully help you integrate it better into your every day reality and maybe even start a completely new life.



Attention!



It is no secret that many young kids today are said to have *attention deficits*, meaning they have a hard time focusing on lessons in school, etc. As you might know people like to call it a *disorder* and readily give out prescriptions against this so called *ailment of the mind*. (Oh yes, and the *hyperactivity!*)

Thinking about the fact that those very children were born into a world that was already *wired* from the start, packed with mobile phones and internet content always made me wonder.

In fact it even drove me to conduct an independent survey with about 100 students from Berlin, asking them about their notions of technology. And what I found out amazed me.

I do not want to go into detail here, if you are interested you can read more about this survey [here](#), but two key points that I found were that children grown up in the Net Age

1. can shift their attention rapidly from moment to moment.
2. and therefore find it hard to satisfy parent's and educator's expectations

The second point is a big problem all in itself and largely related to the fact that classroom context and lesson content are often not stimulating the youngster's at-

tention, but since this would call for a book of its own, I want to leave this aside here to focus on this skill of ***shifting attention rapidly from moment to moment*** which is a characteristic that we will see more and more in the future, both in adults and kids.

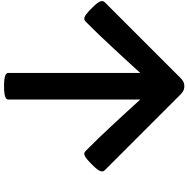
The use of high speed real-time information technology slowly but surely changes our brain. Imagine huge swarms of relatively small packets of information processed in a rapid fire way. Imagine trying to read the license plates of a few hundred cars rushing by in split second intervals under a bridge. Ever wondered what that does to our attention span?

Linda Stone, a researcher of online behavior speaks of ***Continuous Partial Attention***:

“Continuous partial attention describes how many of us use our attention today. It is different from multi-tasking. The two are differentiated by the impulse that motivates them. When we multi-task, we are motivated by a desire to be more productive and more efficient. We’re often doing things that are automatic, that require very little cognitive processing. We give the same priority to much of what we do when we multi-task — we file and copy papers, talk on the phone, eat lunch — we get as many things done at one time as we possibly can in order to make more time for ourselves and in order to be more efficient and more productive.

To pay continuous partial attention is to pay partial attention — CONTINUOUSLY. It is motivated by a desire to be a LIVE node on the network.”

- *Business Week* July 24, 2008



In other words: Multitasking is intended to actually *give* us more time for ourselves and others while *Continuous Partial Attention* can cripple our attention span and swallow our precious time, leaving us more exhausted and less productive than we could be; *Shifting attention rapidly* may increase our flexibility, but it also makes us more prone to distraction.

The technology in itself is neutral. It is up to us to find the right balance.

Having said that...



Remember to take a *Time Out*



When we sit too long in front of the screen we tend to forget what motivated us to turn it on in the first place. Maybe it was an article we wanted to read, maybe a video we wanted to see or a friend we wanted to talk to.

On the way to that article, video or friend a thousand other things distract us: An Email, an instant message, a news tidbit, a flashy advertisement, etc.

When we finally remember to do that first thing which had originally motivated us, we might be tired already, but we try again to check out that article, video or friend and – again – get distracted along the way.

The above scenario, albeit exaggerated, can repeat for hours and hours, if we don't take time to refocus!

If you feel yourself distracted and tired by too many things clamoring for your attention, **log out!** Cook a healthy meal. Work out. Take a walk. Read a book. In short:

Gain **more** from the Net by using it *less*!



Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out

One of the areas most affected by the Net is undoubtedly the sphere of social relations. According to statistics *Social Media* is more popular than ever before, shadowing even the use of search engines in its relentless expansion.

The term *Social Media* – as I use it here - does not refer to specific software or application, but to the whole range of possible *wired* or *wireless* human interaction through virtual communities, chats, email, etc.

To begin with, we should note two things:

1. We connect to people online that we know from *real life*.
2. We establish new connections with and are influenced by *virtual* strangers.

The potentiality of the latter is by necessity always bigger than the first, simply because there are more people on the planet than we could possibly be affiliated to *in real life*.

Mobile phone companies and other communication corporations sell their devices by advertising that you can “stay in touch with all of your friends all the time”. We already spoke about what can happen if you really are *connected all the time*: Attention span will dwindle, along with productivity and inspiration. So that is that...

But who really are the people that we connect to online? And how do we interact?

It's just a Habit!

By nature human beings are attracted to the familiar and wary or even afraid of the unknown. We are creatures with strong *habits*. Most of the time our *habits* fully dictate our life and the way our day is structured.

This is part of our animal heritage, our brains are hardwired in a very fundamental way to stick with what we know and to avoid the unknown in order to protect ourselves and our offspring.



In the same way, human beings tend to have very *habitual* social relations. Depending on where and how you grew up you might still be in contact with your friends from kindergarten. Maybe even now you live close to where you were born, staying in touch with the family structures and peer groups that you grew up around.

This is not a bad thing. It simply illustrates how strong those social bonds actually are. If you live in a big city, maybe your experience is very different. Maybe your family and the peer groups that you grew up with are far away and you live your life with a sense

of anonymity and relative freedom. But the fact remains:

There is a tendency to connect to people that we *already* know although the potential of connections to people we don't know *yet* is always far bigger.

Now let us take a look at what happens to this hard wired behavior online.

Leaving the harbor...



If we want to have a truly productive and enriching experience from the Net, contrary to the fleeting sense of entertainment and idle distraction that is commonly derived from our online life, we have to make the most out of the potential for networking and making the right connections to the right people.

This is especially true if you are planning to make a living from working online, but more about this later.

The funny thing about *Social Media* is that it works contrary to our animal hard wiring almost automatically. In other words, the moment you go to Facebook, Twitter, etc. it is almost impossible not to be influenced by people other than your direct *friends*.

Every person brings his own *circle of connections*. Those circles intersect. In this way, even people with no direct *relation* will be able to influence and be influenced by each

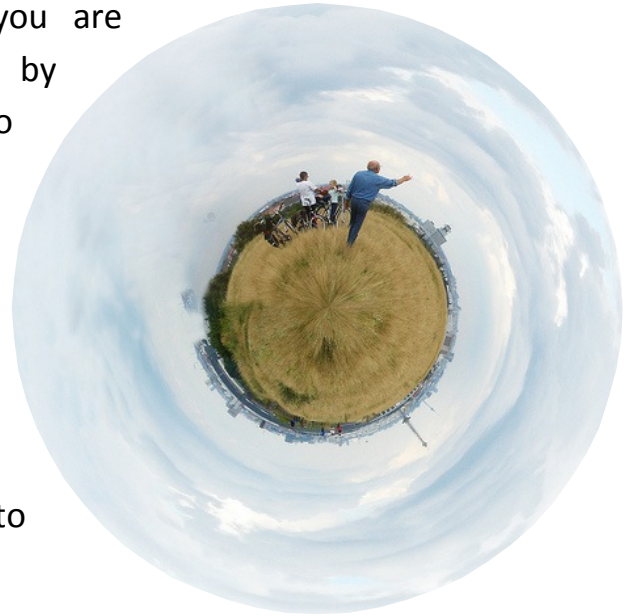
other.

This underscores the fact that theoretically you are connected to everyone on the planet almost by default. For more information about this, see also the principle of *Six degrees of separation*, known as the “Human Web” which states that *“everyone is at most six steps away from any other person on Earth”*.

Is it difficult to be connected to so many people at the same time? Maybe not. Does it take courage to expand your circles of care & kinship to new people? Maybe it does.

But the rejuvenating effect that those new connections are creating will eventually make it seem easier and you will become more comfortable connecting to total strangers as potential friends, colleagues and supporters.

Now that we've seen how closely connected we actually are and how the net reflects that back to us, let's take a deeper look at the ways in which we connect online and how those might differ from more conventional modes of networking and socializing.



A Pledge for Free Choice

Wherever we are living in this world, our lifestyle and choices will always be influenced by the people that surround us: If people around you are transmitting joy and inspiration about the infinite possibilities of life, it will “rub off” on you. If people around you wallow in a sense of meaninglessness and undirected action, don't be surprised if you see the same lack of motivation and *pizzazz* in your own life.



It is an indisputable fact of our three-dimensional life “in the flesh” that we cannot choose the initial family, city, culture or society that we are born into.

In the same involuntary way we follow our natural tendencies (as described above) and are influenced by the people that surround us by nature, not by choice!

People who have the experience of living in a small village or places that exercise a “village-mentality” will know how hard it is if you actually *do* want to

get out of your natural peer group and start hang-ing out with a different crowd one day.

The chatter on the rumor circuits will follow your every move. Acting “out of character” will be cause for skepticism and silent reprimand by the members of your surrounding.

A similar example can be found in people growing up in ghettos or urban areas with a high crime-rate. Individuals who actually make it out of the downward spiral of violence and drug-abuse have to swim *against the stream* of their dictated surrounding and manage to get their head above the commonly accepted behaviors and daily routines.

But even if you are living a fairly normal life, the principle will be the same. You are always surrounded by all kinds of different people. Whether you like it or not, all of those individuals are influencing you, either directly or indirectly.

Even those people that we “choose” to connect to in our free-time are often enough as well simply part of our natural tendency to maintain the *status quo*.

So what happened to our free choice, here?

Let's face it. In most cases we never had one to begin with. Imagine being born as a farmer in the 17th century in Europe. A child to slaves in the Americas. A factory worker in Cambodia, and so on and so forth. Even if you live in one of the bustling metropolises on this planet, the fact remains unchanged:

We almost have no control of the people that we are surrounded by and very little

chance of escaping the influence of those circles around us.

The tiny **window of free choice** in all of this are our relations on the Net which, I believe, eventually will completely transform the way we live our daily lives.

Literally for the first time in human history we can *freely select* our acquaintances based on shared interests, goals and lifestyles from all over the world!



Where before the dominating factor used to be a *commonly shared physical space*, city village, etc. this has given way to an almost infinite possibility of global relations.

True, a shared language is important, but since many people speak a number of languages today (and English is commonly accepted by connected individuals as a bridging tongue) this is actually not such a big hindrance.

Even different timezones are not an obstacle anymore due to the increasingly flexible nature of our daily routines (especially if we make a living online).

In my experience, relationships that are chosen independently actually even tend to be far more satisfying and less obstructed by envy, manipulation and other negative factors commonly encountered in face-to face acquaintances!

So, to make a long story short:

Stop submitting to the influence of your “natural” surrounding and reclaim control on who's influencing you by building circles of friends online based on shared interests!



Just for the record: I don't think that we should try ridding ourselves of our natural social circles, disconnecting from our kindergarten peers and families!

Sometimes a conscious distance from them can indeed be helpful to regain awareness and to start building your own social webs but I think that we should appreciate those connections, in fact – we will be able to appreciate our families and longstanding pals even *more* if we do go out and build our own nurturing *tribes* on the Net.

But as long as the human species will be relying on biological reproduction in order to ensure the continuance of our consciousness, we should not try to replace the natural givens but rather add to them in a spirit of inclusion whatever is needed.

As outrageous as that may sound, *always* keep in mind that we live in a developing universe. **Everything** that we take for granted, is liable to **change**.

Online Livelihood

Covering Ground

About 20 years ago I became fascinated with computers. Actually I wanted to have a gaming console, but my parents gave me an old 286 instead that they bought second hand from an IT student next door. (They said this way I'd learn more from it, and I am forever grateful for their decision)



Needless to say, this nondescript gray box was very slow. Almost nothing ran on there without serious modification to core parts of the operating system.

So when the Internet Age finally set in, I had already spent innumerable hours programming and thumbing manuals bigger than the bible. (Not to mention banging my head against the wall of incomprehensible error codes!)

So I started learning basic HTML and how to program little web pages on free public hosting services that gave me a few megabytes on their FTP to play with.

This all happened while I was still in school. My teachers

asking me what I want to do with my life. Somehow, the world of worker-bees, cubicles and stale office coffee didn't appeal to me. So I started planning my escape. The goal: to work only when I want to.

People told me to be “reasonable”. I chose not to – And it set me free. You can do it, too. Be “unreasonable”! Ignore people that ridicule you. You'll have the last laugh, eventually - traveling around the world and experiencing life at your own pace.

Here come the Skeptics...

We've all seen those three-step programs to “get rich quick”, “making money in your sleep” and other *easy ways out*. Let's face it: There is no *easy way out*.

Becoming a workaholic, on the other hand – is also not an option. No matter what you do, chances are that you can improve the way you work. Not by doing more! But by doing **less**!

This is where the Net comes in.

In other words. Making money online *is* possible. Not without any effort on your part. But if you do it the right way, chances are that in the future, after building up your business, you can automate the procedures and take yourself out of the equation.



This way, you will be truly making money in your sleep! But more about this later.

The benefits of “outsourcing” business to the net are many. Here are just a few:

- no rental costs for office space
- no need to commute
- work from home, or abroad
- more space for personal instead of “work” relationships

Please note: You will have lots of free time the moment your online business is running. Time that wants to be filled with meaningful activities. My advice: Already now start thinking of things you want to do when you get there.

Go traveling, learn the piano, karate or a specific language that always fascinated you.

If your only goal is to make money, there's a big danger that when you'll see the dollars coming in, you will continue the workaholic's life of business for the sake of business simply because you haven't thought of any alternatives. (It happens to all of us!)

A lot of money and free time may seem cool at first. But it can become a problem if you don't have any meaningful way to spend it.

Dig up your child-hood dreams, oddball obsessions, pick something and go for it!

How to Get Started



As I've said before, the first thing we have to know is that it is indeed possible to make an honest living online in the same way it is possible *offline*.

Actually the similarities between working online and offline are far bigger than it might seem at first glance.

So, before we finally get down to the practical aspects of all of this, let me clarify what I mean with “honest” - it may sound like a moralistic concept, but far from it!

I define it as follows: An honest living means **“helping others and being compensated for your time or efforts.”**

It is about contributing richness or value to other people's lives! It is not about growing your bank-account, although that will be a nice side-effect if you do it right.

So, let us establish this as a ground rule:

If you aren't helping anyone, your online business won't take off.

It's the same principle as in the offline world. If your bread

makes people vomit, you won't sell any. If you're a bad doctor and don't put your patients to sleep before pulling teeth, nobody will come to you, - you get the idea.

But the beautiful thing here is that in the online world the infrastructures are very different and developing every day towards more communication and interconnectedness between people all over the planet, so **something unhelpful will not even attract anyone's attention** anymore.

Products and services that are helpful to people sell.

(You can of course dump millions of advertisement on a bad product, which is what huge corporations are still doing all over the planet, but that's not what I call sustainable.)

So let us have a look at a few modes of helping others and supporting yourself online.



● Writing

This has multiple applications, of course. Here are a few that I tested for you.

✓ Writing your own Blog and Monetizing Traffic

A very solid way to get started is selecting a specific niche that you know a lot or simply are passionate about. Sign up for a free blog at Blogger or Wordpress, write regularly(!) about your topic, build an audience by using Social Media and networking with other bloggers. If your writing is helpful to people and you give your audience a way to reward you either by donations or by purchasing products or services, they will support you!

😊 **Upsides:** Write about what you like and learn *how to engage an audience!* Even if you choose not to become a writer as your main occupation, learning how to keep an audience interested and spread a buzz is one of the most important skills of online publishing. Big companies spend billions on marketing and advertisement campaigns only to get 200 milliseconds of customer attention. You can get started without having to spend anything.

😞 **Downsides:** It will take some time. Building an audience is not something that happens overnight. But if you stand out in a way that is both consistent, entertaining and contributing to your reader's lives in a meaningful way – you're there!

✓ Pay per View Writing

There are a number of sites that allow you to write articles about topics of your choice and get paid for doing so. One of these sites is [Triond](#). You can post anything you like from Pottery to Poetry, it will be approved manually and then put on a site related to your topic. You get paid every month for the amount of traffic directed to your articles.

- You get 50 % of the earnings when viewers click an advertisement on the site
- You can integrate your own ads (with Google's AdSense) and get 100 % per click

😊 **Upsides:** Focus on Writing. Leave the Design and Monetizing to the admins. If you create articles that contain the right keywords, chances are high that people will find you through search engines and you don't have to worry about bringing traffic. In order to maximize this effect, I recommend going to www.trends.google.com, seeing what people are searching for and inserting as many of these keywords in your texts as possible without sounding too desperate. It's a matter of finding the right balance.

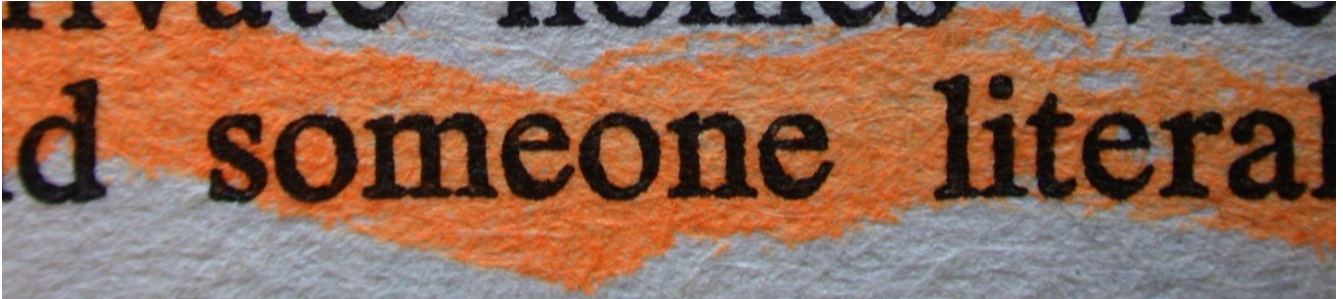
😞 **Downsides:** You don't have full control over the way your content looks and where and what advertisements will be embedded in your articles. Payouts may at the beginning be very low, but it's a consistent income-stream that you can feed and grow.

✓ On Demand Writing

Sites like [Textbroker](#) are markets where authors and publishers meet. As an author you can browse through a range of different (very targeted) projects and select one that fits your expertise. The number of words and keywords are specified by the publisher. Send in your application by writing an example article and get rated. If your first article is very good, this will set the income per word for future articles. But even if you don't receive the highest rating at first (most people don't) you can gradually improve your ranking over time.

😊 **Upsides:** Very simple procedure. No need to bid on projects. Click on a project, claim it, send in your text within the deadline (mostly 2-3 days) and if it's good the publisher will accept it. I found this to be a very good solution and blissful alternative to the scenario of having too many writers underbid each other as it is common practice on big freelance writing portals.

😞 **Downsides:** You cannot write about whatever you want. Topics are very focused, often demanding specific knowledge (or research) and sometimes they are a bit dry like writing technical descriptions, etc. In any case, this will help you get started earning respectable amounts of money within a relatively short period of time. It *is* hard work, that's for sure, but the short deadlines definitely help to stay on track!



● Live Online Classes



One of the best ways to help others is to share your knowledge live and direct in real-time online classes, also known as *online teaching sessions*, *eLearning courses*, *remote coaching*, etc.

Whether we are young or old, we only succeed in life, if we always continue to learn new things. This holds true especially for our short-lived times in which new jobs and skill-sets are being created every second.

So, **success implies learning**. Never-ending learning, in fact. This in itself is nothing new. But how can we use the net to make the most of it?

There are dozens of sites where people learn or teach languages online. Those can be

grouped into two categories: Either they are free *marketplaces* in which tutors or teachers can advertise services students then can choose from, or they are online schools, which offer curriculums and subjects similar to an offline school or university with the main difference that the actual classes are held via voice (and video).

I don't want to talk too much about the marketplace solutions here, because honestly, I've tried them and didn't find them satisfying. Having worked as a teacher in private institutions I have very high demands on educational programs and unfortunately those marketplaces that I've tried seem to have an issue with quality because they are allowing almost everybody to teach almost anything which is – well, nice - but difficult.



Would you like to be taught windsurfing by a person that never saw the ocean? Care for learning a language *the wrong way* and end up in a fist fight because your language teacher wasn't absolutely sure of what that word meant you heard in a movie?

But even for the teachers, if they're excellent or not - there's the problem of low payments. In addition to the ongoing competition between hundreds of self-appointed teachers, you have to pay those sites commissions up to 20 % for each session.

Then there are “online schools” that have fixed prices, teachers and subjects. Learn Out Live, the school which I co-founded with a few other teachers is such a “virtual school”.

We boiled everything down to the essentials and this is one of the reasons why it has been very successful so far. Here's the principle:

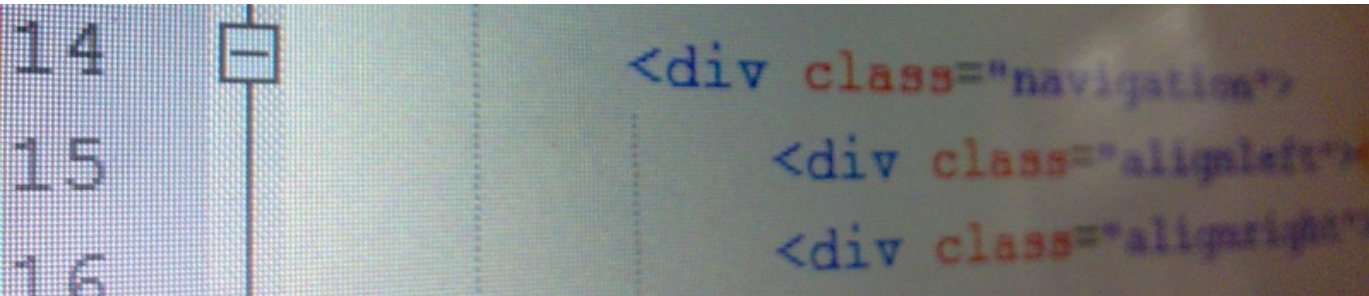
- We give one-on-one language lessons over Skype.
- Students can buy *lesson packs* (time credits) which they can flexibly use up over a period of days, weeks or even months.

It doesn't take much computer knowledge to do this. Essentially everyone who feels fit to teach people something can do it online in the same way we do.

All you need is a very simple page where you describe what you offer and how people can contact you. Payment of lessons can be handled by an online banking service of your choice, e.g. PayPal or Moneybookers. Connect to your student by Skype (or a similar software) and start teaching within units of 45 or 30 minutes.

😊 **Upsides:** Very effective! Students learn quickly due to the comforting environment of their home and a non-evasive atmosphere, leading to satisfaction for both student & teacher. A big plus here are the flexible schedules.

😞 **Downsides:** The worst thing that can happen is that you schedule something and then the person doesn't show up. I've heard other sites even speak about this phenomenon as “ghost students”. But since you didn't take a car or train to somewhere, and normally don't lose much time, it's totally acceptable.



● Freelance Web-Design and Development

If you have the skills, help people realize their online projects from websites to advanced apps, services etc.!

Maybe you are a wiz with Gimp or Photoshop, maybe you know one of the programming languages like your native tongue or are very knowledgeable about how to drive quality traffic to a site.

There are a lot of free marketplaces where people post their projects and others who have the skills (or think they do) can reply with their offers.

Again, in those situations people are often undercutting each others' offers and there are many stories where either so called “professionals” left their customers with unsatisfying or no outcomes, or publishers didn't pay for a job well done. Marketplace admins take this as an excuse to control payment procedures and then demand very high commissions for “security”, etc.

But as with online teaching I'd suggest to simplify the process here!

In my experience **it is more valuable and satisfying for both sides to build sustainable relationships with individuals *outside of those marketplaces*.**

If you post helpful articles and answer people's questions using Social Media you can establish yourself as an authority in your field and create trust. In other words: Don't go with the flattened-out roads of the masses but carve out your own pathways!

😊 **Upsides:** If you have a strong circle of friends and supporters who trust you, you can make a very good living by doing this.

😞 **Downsides:** You need to be very highly skilled, both in your specific field and in creating professional relationships of mutual trust and respect! When your client wants you to change certain parts of the project over and over again, you will need a lot of patience, a budget which covers meanderings like this or limits you set from the start.

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So far I haven't given much attention to marketplace solutions that are dealing with services. I don't believe that they are bad or you shouldn't try them, but while using them myself, I felt like too often I was wasting precious time.

Nevertheless, if you want to check them out on your own I would recommend two sites: www.elance.com and www.eufreelance.com

But what about selling products instead of services?

Here, marketplace communities can be very helpful!

● Becoming an Online Merchant

A very good way to start earning a living online is to sell goods on websites that handle all of the payment process and credit card billing for you. You could of course build your own online shopping solution, but it's always best to get started with something where you don't have to invest a lot of time and money *before* you can find out if this strategy works for you. Basically there are two ways of doing this:

1. Sell material goods for shipping
2. Sell digital goods to download

✓ Selling Material goods

Online Auction

Something that most of us have done, or at least heard of, is selling things on eBay. It's a very good way to get started because you can focus on the product while eBay takes care of the rest. If you have an attic or basement with all kinds of things you don't need anymore, you could start out by selling used stuff. Make sure to take a good photo of the product, calculate shipping costs before you start, then begin the auction at the minimal price. (This is in order to reduce eBay fees)

It is funny how there is always someone who needs what you don't need any longer. And so, especially if you have all kinds of stuff that is just catching dust, you might just free yourself from it and make a few bucks at the same time. (More about uncluttering your life, later) If you have a good sense of what people need, you could even buy new things just to sell and make a profit later. But be sure to test your products thoroughly and check for competition before you order 1000 things that will cause you a headache.

😊 **Upsides:** Easy to get started. Get rid of your own or other people's old stuff.

😞 **Downsides:** You have to bring all of it to the post office, calculate shipping, etc. If you do this often, it can become a real time-killer.

Handicraft

If you are a creative person with a lot of talent for stitching, knitting, painting, sewing or any of those things, create your own products and put them on [Etsy](https://www.etsy.com/). (Again you could build your own store, but not everybody wants to mess with that)

You can actually sell everything there from earrings to soap and whatever customers buy there is made by real people like you and me.

People don't want to buy impersonal mass-produced products anymore, which is a very good sign for a developing awareness: There's actually a huge crowd of people supporting lovingly crafted products made by individuals.

😊 **Upsides:** Be creative “hands-on” and make a living from what you love while making other people happy with independently produced goods.

😞 **Downsides:** One of the downsides here is (again) the shipping procedure. If it doesn't annoy you to package things individually and run to the post for each item, this might be for you. But also here, before you manufacture 1000 packs of coconut scented soaps, try it out with one, learn about the competition and experiment with pricing.

✓ **Selling Digital Goods**

Maybe you are a musician or a writer who instead of sending out applications to music labels and publishing houses wants to continue writing or making music.

It is actually easier to make a living doing this than ever before in history! So, while everybody else is whining about not being able to get their book or music album accepted by big record companies or publishing houses, don't join the herd!

With sites like [E-Junkie](#) (one of my favorites, although the name may be a bit off-putting) you can easily upload your products, specify the costs and offer them completely shipping-free to your audience for a small monthly fee.

But it's not just for writers and musicians. Basically, everything that can be downloaded can be sold as well. There are no limitations here. Sell your own movies, tutorials, how-to books, audiobooks, software and so on and so forth.

But keep in mind: If it's not helpful, nobody will buy it!

😊 **Upsides:** If there's a product already, this is very easy to accomplish. Create a simple web-page to feature your work and get an email each time somebody buys. The beautiful thing about this is, that while your product is selling itself you are free to do other things. (Hopefully creating more cool stuff or simply enjoying life!)

😞 **Downsides:** You need to bring your product to people's awareness in a creative and healthy way: Spamming the net with links to your stuff will not help anyone. Advertisement will often be necessary to get the ball rolling, but there are free alternatives, like integrating your product with a well-connected blog or getting other bloggers to write a review by sending them a nice email with the free product.

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Please keep in mind that if you have no or little experience with doing business online, success will not come over night. You will have to learn to discipline yourself, set aside hours for working and for resting in a balanced way. This is probably the hardest part of “online living” and will take far more efforts than earning money.

Slowing down and enjoying life, once you'll have more free time – is the real challenge. Most of us have been conditioned by our education and jobs for so many years that we may fall into depression the moment nobody tells us what to do with our life!

In other words: Earning money (and thus more time) is important. Changing one's attitude to life is even more important, since it determines what you do with your time.

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler.” - Henry David Thoreau

Minimalist Lifestyle

As I've said before, many people think that the moment they start earning a little bit of money online, that's the ultimate goal and from on there it's all a *walk on the beach*.

Actually, it turns out to be quite the opposite.

Because what are we going to do?

There is no need anymore to work 8-10 hours everyday in a job that you only do for the money. You will have lots of time on your hands.

What are you going to do with it? Run to the next mall and buy yourself the biggest Plasma TV, only to discover that the TV program is still as bad as it always was, only now it is louder, brighter and lulling you to sleep more powerfully?

Are you going to start saving for a car or a house so you can enjoy *when it's time*?

The word *Minimalist* seems as if there's a reduction involved. As if there's less of something. And in some sense, that is true...

But what I want to show you in the following chapters is how we can actually get *more* out of life by reducing unnecessary distracting factors.



Dumping Weight

"The things you own end up owning you. " - Tyler Durden

We tend to live with the unchallenged mindset that the more things we own the happier we will be. Even people who consider themselves very *alternative* tend to obey the same principle (just that their stuff is not *mainstream*!)

Mass Media influence over decades through ads and cheap TV programs has turned us into believers of a system which every days spews out millions of products (and smoke) that need to be bought just to maintain running costs and produce more and more products which in reality nobody really needs.

Now: **Making a living online enables you to move whenever you want!**

But... Ever tried moving while owning a ten room apartment stuffed with bulky

furniture, kilos of post-cards, piles of books and souvenirs? Well, maybe not ten rooms, but I think we all have our experiences of moving. It puts us into the position of having to decide what we should keep and what we should leave behind.

For many people this turns into a big headache. The reason for this is that we're emotionally invested in the stuff we own. Most of our possessions we keep not for their direct practical, but for their sentimental value. They make up our sense of self!

So it's not just that all of that stuff doesn't really make us happy. Everybody supposedly *knows* that. But still we own a lot of things that contribute no or little value to our life! In fact, each thing you own is sucking up attention like a sponge. Together they create a constant cloud of distraction that makes it almost impossible to have a peace of mind.

And although a house with garden can be a dream and goal for many, it actually ties us to the spot like a donkey to a stick. We think of it as freedom to have shelves and drawers full of precious stuff we hoarded together over the years only to wake up one day and realize that *if* we wanted to move to somewhere else, we would have to take care of all this highly valued clutter! Store it, sell it, trash it, give it away. The thought is terrifying! It's like cutting off an arm or a leg, we're so invested into our belongings.

So ask yourself a simple question: What is more important to me? *Owning* all kinds of things both bulky and small or being able to live and work from everywhere?

In reality this is not a strict either/or. But owning less *will* help you relocate more!

“Any so-called material thing that you want is merely a symbol: you want it not for itself, but because it will content your spirit for the moment.” - Mark Twain

Riding the wave

Recently there are a lot of books and articles cropping up around the theme of developing a more sustainable lifestyle in order to increase personal freedom and experience relief from wage-slaving, 9-5 or whatever name you want to give it.

Their authors practice and advise different things, like selling and giving away everything until you can “live with 100 things (or less)”, how to live without a car, etc. Others say it is not about the number of things you own (quantity) but about the way you look at them (quality).

The term *Minimalism* has become a widely accepted way of talking about this change in lifestyle, although of course – since everybody's different - it is only natural that there's a whole range of different opinions and strategies to put it into practice.

Minimalism doesn't have anything to do with becoming a monk or living a life without pleasures. In fact, the opposite is the case. By reducing clutter, we can live like kings.

So what *does* it mean? How can we group together all those voices into one core truth?

The bottom line is this: Everybody agrees that we need to make some *serious changes*

to the way we live by *minimizing distractions* and *maximizing* personal happiness and freedom.

Changing towards a *Minimalist* perspective therefore means **gaining *more* from life by owning and consuming *less*!**

On the other hand, *Minimalism* is not just motivated by a desire to become freer as individuals but also by the necessity of the environment. Each person that does not support a system which heavily weighs down on the planet's resources and ecosystems will reduce pressure, leaving the natural self-repairing mechanisms room to reverse the damage. So, instead of loud-mouthing at climate conferences and rallies, the Minimalist silently helps by *not participating*.

Minimalism as a movement is not something new. People of all times and places have been practicing removing clutter and increasing consciousness. But we may just be the first generation that is not just heavily suffering from insane amounts of material but also **informational** clutter!

So, after throwing out or selling things at home, which is an amazingly liberating experience by the way - reduce your information intake! Don't watch TV or read newspapers just for information's sake. For most of us, information has become a drug. It will not be easy to dis-attach. Expect serious withdrawal symptoms in the first weeks!

“Do the thing you fear to do and keep on doing it... that is the quickest and surest way ever yet discovered to conquer fear.” - Dale Carnegie

Slay a Dragon daily!

The most common excuses I hear when talking about decluttering one's life and living a life independent of a fixed place and job are simply that: excuses.

For some people working for 20 years in the same office is a dream. But if you are reading this book, I assume you are looking for alternatives.

Here's a quick exercise:

If you feel you'd like to make a change in your work- and personal life but each time you want to get started your mind fills with criticism and wariness, ask yourself...

What is holding me back from doing.... X ?

Write down your answer. Often, just recording the fear in a written form will help dis-attaching from it.

When you've lowered the barrier, go out and start doing things that creep you out. Ask your boss for a raise. Talk to strangers. It doesn't matter what you do in detail. What is important that we continuously do what scares you. Start with little things. Move upwards. When we get stuck, it is often because we *think* and *worry* instead of doing things! Even if the experience isn't pleasant, it's worth more than the thoughts about it.

The Tipping Point

So, let's say you've managed to do all of the steps above.

- You built a close network of supporters, friends and colleagues online
- you have started to create one or multiple online income-streams
- you reduced your material baggage down to the essentials so you can live and work wherever you like and also you eliminated your addiction to constant information

If you think you need to review one of those points please feel free to go back and repeat the first chapters as often as you like.

Otherwise...**Congratulations!**

You are now free to do whatever you like: Go to the beach, take a walk in the woods, or maybe move to a different city or country altogether that supports your lifestyle better, maybe somewhere where you can move freely without owning a car. Want to travel? Learn to tango? Study Arabic? What do you really want to do? Now is the time.

If you feel that you are still spending way too much time at your *offline* job and don't have the energy or resources to start something new, please read the last chapter.

In any case, let's now take a step back and look at “the big picture”.

Making friends with reality

“If we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless.” - Jamie Paolinetti

Imagine...

Imagine a large slice of people on earth start shifting towards making a living online. Imagine less people supporting the factory mindset of endless work hours and vanishing vacation weeks.

People will have more free time to do what they really care about. They will be less tense from working in cramped offices and fast food restaurants just to get by. We will have more time and attention space for our loved ones. A lot of capacities will be freed up, both in terms of material and in an emotional, mental or even spiritual sense.

We will spend less time watching mediocre TV programs just to “relax” from a hard day at work. Also alcohol and other “after work sedatives”



will not be needed to numb the senses before the morning comes. Instead of shoveling fast food in front of the TV, you might feel a sudden urge to cook something healthy.

And something very interesting starts to happen: Instead of the world appearing outside of us as an external part that we are struggling *against*, it is beginning to appear *within* us as an integral part of our being.

Most of us use our jobs and social lives as a stage to complain and fight reality. When we optimize both as described in this book the struggle suddenly stops. For lack of excuses we begin to relax. And suddenly life isn't as bad as it seemed when you were working after-hours in a gloomy office and cursing God or another deity of your choice.

If you aren't living the life you want to live, there is nobody to blame.

Reality is *not* against you.

But when we constantly move in social circles and work environments that violently deny everything that is not profit-oriented it's impossible to slow down and enjoy life.

And this is why not just our personal lives but also our societal systems have to become more and more minimal, losing their heavy weight in terms of material and becoming more flexible and sustainable.

Please note: The following chapter is not about opinions of right versus wrong but about wiping dust from our imagination skills and daring to “think big”!

Where Democracy goes to die...

The moment more and more people will work from the net and shift their location around the planet flexibly, the concept of *state* becomes very translucent. You figured.

In many parts of the world people still have strong faith in governments, often because they expect certain financial supports and security from their nations.

This includes services like pension, health-care, child-care, unemployment relief and so on and so forth – which are slowly eating away at the budgets of those states which are offering them, backed by the idea that “everybody is equal.”

The idea is noble, no doubt about it. But ultimately such a system leads to debt and is – in other words – highly unsustainable. Those systems are in fact all breaking down.

We should note that the problem on the other hand is not in the general idea, but in its *practical application*.

Too much state well-fare builds up expectation in the public, which if not met – is responded to by all kinds of negativity. In other words, what happens is that people take those “support wheels” for granted and then get very furious when you take them away, challenging them to stand on their *own feet*.

Those situations lead to developmental gridlock. Instead of “growing up” to become self-directed, independent human beings, people lean on the state from birth to death, initially in the hope of security, ultimately simply out of fear to be free.

Such a situation is neither good for a state nor for an individual. It makes constructive change and flexible adaption to global conditions almost impossible.

Out of the mutual dependence between the state and a person all kinds of negative consequences are born so that whenever pension gets cut or unemployment relief drops, people “take to the streets”.

Migrating to cyberspace (in whatever way is appropriate) will be of great benefit to everyone. Built on the growing awareness of individual freedom people will recognize that they are free to choose where they want to live. So, first of all, you are not locked away within your own state boundaries anymore. (Take it or leave it!)

Secondly, if a significant part of the population makes this shift, there will be less need for highly unsustainable well-fare systems, simply because people will feel their own independence and freedom on a deeper level and therefore be able to make better choices for themselves. And if those choices are bad, well – it's up to the one who chose (the individual), not some kind of abstract idea of a government somewhere “in the sky”.

-

The idea of democracy is based on the fact that the people elect representatives to govern their country, in other words: *the people are the government!*

Sadly but true, this simple fact too often wanders off into the shadows of bureaucracy, incomprehensible legal systems and financial jungles where it quietly goes to die.

The good news

By becoming freer and less location dependent human beings, we will

- be less prone to authoritarian, ideological systems and state abuse
- have less violence due to the clashes of State vs. People or even State vs. State
- see even more movements between cultures, resulting in synergies
- and therefore have lower levels of racism (which is based on lack of exposure)
- encourage people to invest their time in developmental & educational projects
- States will become lighter. Borders more fluid
- and much much more...

If we make a few changes, both individuals and states will benefit, the first from being freer and actually realizing it, the latter from becoming free from the endless dependence and energy sucking of its inhabitants. And the moment we are less heavily leaning on our states, this will actually free up a lot of resources for global developmental projects and other spontaneous forms of independent welfare. And don't get me wrong. This is not about philanthropy but about making real change happen!

A Glimpse of Something Else

In many wisdom traditions (I use this term rather than *religion* to hint at core practices, not ideologies) around the planet, people have always been striving to become more peaceful and compassionate towards their fellow human beings and environment.

Imagine Christian monks engaged in prayers of forgiveness. Buddhists meditating with an intention of well-being for all plants, animals and sentient creatures. Whirling Sufi dervishes lost in ecstatic dance of gratitude and appreciation of beauty.

I am sure most of us will not want to live their lives secluded in a monastery or in the straightjacket of medieval ideologies, cut off from modern life as we know it, but on the other hand I think everybody agrees that a world with a bit more peacefulness, gratitude and appreciation for life around us would be quite nice.

The good news is that by adopting a more mindful and minimal lifestyle we will actually begin to see those traits emerging within us quite naturally. Not without a certain sense of willingness or directed focus, of course.

A freer lifestyle helps a lot. But it does take practice.

And in the same way we can practice awareness and peacefulness in our everyday realities (Zen teachers speak of “carrying water, chopping wood”) we can practice mindfulness while surfing the net, chatting to friends or working in front of the screen.

***“mindfulness meditation:** a form in which distracting thoughts and feelings are not ignored but instead acknowledged and observed non-judgmentally as they arise in order to detach from them and gain insight and awareness.”* - Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers.



Suggestions for Practice

(Please note that the following practices are general guidelines only and not intended to be medical advice but rather meant to inspire you to come up with your own practices and observations.)

✓ The Email Syndrome

Hanging around your Email window and clicking refresh every two seconds is not just very unproductive, it has a very deteriorating effect on our mindset. Mindfulness refers to a calm attention of one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations. Putting oneself into a constant state of expectation can ruin this quiet appreciation of what's going on. It makes slowing down impossible!

Even if you are waiting for an important mail, why to waste your time staring and clicking? I am sure you will agree that there are better ways to spend those precious moments.

I would suggest starting with checking your email twice a day. Once around noon (where attention levels are down and the brain is in a state of rest) and in the evening or at night when the day's business has passed. Then, work towards only once per day.

At first, you might wonder if it's really such a big deal, but if you do serious business



online it can become a serious problem for the following reasons:

1. Most of emails we get are simply irrelevant! Spam, newsletters, etc.
2. If you receive something that needs an elaborate reply and you start doing it immediately the moment the mail comes in, it can distract you completely.
3. We tend to expect to receive more emails than we are actually sending out.

Working with Email can in fact become a very good practice of observing and working with our mindset of constant expectation. *Click, Click... "Am I rich, yet?"*

Have you ever noticed that if you constantly expect *big things* to happen, there is a tendency not to notice the smaller things along the way like a beautiful sky, a breeze of wind in the trees, a dog smelling a flower, etc.

Those little things have a lot of advantages:

- they don't cost any money
- they are happening all the time
- they foster a sense of gratefulness and wonder at the mysteries of life

Also: Did you know that there is already a special term for what happens to our breath when we work with email? It is called [Email Apnea](#) and refers to a temporary *suspension, shallowness or even absence of breathing* while doing email.

✓ How Breath and Attention interact

One of the most central methods of traditional mindfulness practice is observing the breath. Have you ever tried just sitting somewhere and doing nothing else but just looking and feeling how the air goes in and out, without forcing anything?



One point of those practices is to notice that it's not very easy at all! We're constantly distracted by thoughts, feelings, memories and all kinds of sense perceptions coming from the outside.

Have you ever noticed what happens to your breath when you sit in front of the screen? Since we are working with very complex systems that demand a lot of attention and brain power the muscles in our body quickly tense up and our breath becomes abrupt and shallow.

Especially when we are bombarded with messages, emails and other bits of information that seemingly demand an immediate reaction, this flattening of the breath and tension of muscles (especially around the eyes, mouth, shoulders and back) is very common.

A good way to deal with this, is to...

1. **Stop whatever you're doing**
2. **Notice the breath in either nostrils or lower belly**
3. **Continue and try staying focused, until you forget again...**

-

Doing this practice, one should not try to reach a particular goal. Also it's not about doing some kind of esoteric ritual. It's just an exercise. Don't take it too seriously!

This practice can become a way of becoming acquainted with the way our attention broadens and narrows down depending on our conscious participation.

The deeper we experience how our body and mind react while being online, the better we will be able to make the necessary adjustments to optimize our experience.

And with constant practice we can actually become more peaceful both on and offline. We become less prone to simply **react** to all kinds of impulses and we have more space from which we can **act** independently and creatively.

✓ “It is easier to split an atom...



than to break a prejudice. “ Those were the famous words of Albert Einstein.

What he meant is that it's actually quite difficult to overcome our prejudices.

We (hopefully) all agree that having a lot of prejudices isn't something to brag about since each prejudice we entertain limits our experience significantly.

But how can we reduce them?

By becoming an online teacher I learned a lot about this strange phenomenon, although I've had many cross-cultural experiences before. The fact of the matter is that by constantly being in contact with so many different people from all over the planet you start to see how “open-minded” you really are.

Most of the time we like to think of ourselves as less afraid and more open than we actually are. This is not bad, but I think that accepting our narrow-mindedness is actually one of the best ways of becoming more open-minded and thus – experience more!

It's like I explained in the earlier chapter about social relationships; we simply have very strong habits that keep us connected to what we know and within a safe distance from the *unknown* in order to protect our self-image, etc.

If you remember we also spoke about the fact that you cannot avoid being influenced *against your hard-wiring*, meaning you'll meet a lot of people online that are not from your city, country and do not share the same language or alphabet!

Now, let's say you log on to some kind of *Social Media* site and the following happens:

Somebody is contacting you. Let's say the name of the person you cannot read, because the letters are Arabic, Thai, Hebrew, Chinese, etc.

Also, the profile picture of this person shows that he or she looks very different from the people in your neighborhood or family. If your family is from Scandinavia, imagine this stranger comes from Africa. If your family is African, imagine this person is from China or Japan.

Now, let's say this stranger and you both speak a bit of English (not necessarily as a mother tongue, but as a bridging language) and start a conversation.

If you are courageous enough to look very deeply inside, you might see that certain prejudices coming from your cultural background or so called “heritage” are immediately overlaying the conversation with this stranger on a subtle level.

It is like those Augmented Reality applications: You are looking at the real thing, in this case your conversation with this person, but on top of this there are all kinds of super-imposed stereotypes and reservations cluttering the communication channels.

Will all of this influence your view and judgment of this *virtual stranger*?

The answer is: Probably, yes.

If you have good observation skills, you will see that in some of those cases, you are not actually talking to this other human being: To a large extent you **are just talking to your own prejudices and cultural biases!** (This is happening from both sides, of course.)



I know, it's scary. We have lots of *conversational sawdust* without any real connection!

Those psychological defense mechanisms are executed on very deep levels, stowed away behind core parts of our *operating systems*, completely automated and most of the time inaccessible to our waking consciousness.

It happens all the time, actually. But online we tend to observe it more easily.

So what to do?

The beauty of observing and allowing things to gently come to our awareness is that this is actually an act of integration all in itself. (This is a common principle and works for a lot of situations.)

So in order to *get rid* of a prejudice we have to observe our biased mindset more acutely. And in order to do this we should first be able to actually *admit* that maybe we *might* indeed be a bit biased regarding this or that specific culture, behavior, etc. It does take a bit of courage.

Living an active social life online enables us to have more and more of those cross-cultural *edge-experiences* where two or more completely different worlds overlap.

And the more we dip ourselves into those waters willingly, the more accustomed we will become to this, eventually learning to skillfully navigate between people from everywhere on the planet without having to spend our savings on plane tickets.

This is a tool earlier generations didn't have. What happened in the village, stayed in the village. Occurrences of people with other skin color, language, culture etc. were rare and only happened in big cities.

One reason why doing this online is such an effective practice, is that our human nature makes it easier to observe and reflect on things when distracting factors of a “strange” or *alien* environment are minimized. In this case, you are doing all of it from home.

If you take a plane and start running around in a culture which is completely different than your own, it will be harder to keep track of your biases, simply because the influence of the surrounding impressions are so enveloping.

Please note: This doesn't mean that they are not there (doing their dirty job in the dark) but that our waking mind is completely engrossed by the strange excitement of new sense perceptions.

But keeping *one foot* in your culture while stretching your feelers outwards to other cultures via the net is actually one of the best practices of cultivating more tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity, not just in theory but actual practice.

Doing this we **exchange our fears and prejudices for actual experiences!**

Loose Ends and Troubleshooting

It is in the nature of ambitious books like this one, that reality is changing faster than it can be written about.

We need to keep in mind that we live in a developing universe.

The way we publish books nowadays and the world at large has changed and is continuing to change at an ever-accelerating pace.

So if there are any changes to anything I've written in the previous chapters, I'll provide a free update – since this text comes in an ebook format, this is actually very easy.

Thank you for your understanding.

Apart from that I would now like to make a few points to conclude.

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Being Helpful

This book is intended to teach people **how to make a living online by helping others.**

If you are not having success, chances are that you need to be more patient or simply haven't been lucky so far but the biggest reason for why people's online businesses fail is that **they aren't helping anyone.** (*Others* decide what is helpful, not you!)

This is why the chapter about Social Relationships in this book comes *before* the chapters about the actual practical methods of reeling in “the bacon”.

First we need to learn to relate to other human beings in a meaningful way. I'm not suggesting that you don't know how to do it. Improvement is always possible, though.

But due to the peculiar nature of the net and our habitual hard-wiring as social creatures we really need to take a few simple facts into consideration:

- Before anything else we have to learn how to form deep and meaningful relationships on all kinds of levels to all kinds of people from all over the world!
- Helping others doesn't cost anything! You can start right now!
- You'll only make money if you are helping people *in the best possible way!*

All of those points are important and this is the place where you should check yourself if you feel that what you do doesn't really work and your business doesn't “take off”!

Whatever product or service you are offering, it has to be a premium extra ***in addition to***, not ***instead of*** your willingness to help people *for free!*

In fact, if you offer free articles, videos, podcasts or other downloadable goods and they're valuable to people, they will want to express their gratitude by supporting you either by a donation or by purchasing premium products or services.

Also, please always keep in mind that when I talk about “helping others” I am not referring to an abstract idea but making real improvements in other people's lives. This can range from a smile to providing better food.

Another question I want to raise here is:

“Why is it so important to make a living online? Can't I continue with my day job and still be helpful to others?”

Sure you can. There are probably people that would like to continue commuting to their offices and workplaces every day and sit there 8-10 hours. But, if you really want to become free to help others with your *full power*, this will not work. Here's why:

- At the end of the day, you'll be so dried up that the only thing you'll want to do is watch TV and be clubbed into submission by cheap programs and beer.
- Working with people all day long will make you sensitive to their needs, desires and opinions. You will subconsciously adapt to the *herd mentality*
- If we don't spend the most part of our day by doing things which are extremely helpful to others, don't expect that suddenly at the end of the day it will start!

These are just a few of the reasons why, if you really want to help your fellow human beings more powerfully, you will need more time which is completely at your disposal.

But it has even deeper connotations if we not just look at economic but also inner

factors of personal development: In order to cultivate mindfulness and compassion for others, you will need to have time to actually practice this at your own pace.

Sure, it is possible to practice while working in a hospital, office job or restaurant. No doubt about it. But the fact of the matter is that our habitual hard-wiring resists anything that has to do with becoming more open-minded and inclusive of other people, cultures, opinions and so on and so forth. (It's *our way or the highway!*)

So, in order to bypass those psychological barriers, we have to submit ourselves to intense everyday practice while sitting in front of the screen *and* walking around the city or in nature. It is possible to work on yourself while sitting in an office, but effects may be limited, especially if you feel an ever so slight resistance towards your environment.

Our personality is like a car. Growing our character is like learning how to drive.

If you haven't mastered the art of driving and someone suddenly drops you into a *Hummer* on a busy “Spaghetti Junction”, chances are it's not going to end in a nice way.

The World is like this *Spaghetti Junction*.

Your car will break down, lose its paint job,- you get to see “the finger” of your fellow drivers, windows will shatter or the whole thing will simply go off in flames.

So it's a commonly agreed upon idea that for the *protection of the driver and everybody else*, people should first **learn to drive on a practice ground!**

In the same way if you try to help others before having helped yourself, chances are

that you will become even crankier, more opinionated and frustrated (at the fact it doesn't work and that others don't care) than before.

This is one of the strongest reasons why we need to get out of our wage-slaving jobs.

If we don't stop our lifestyles of worker-bees, we will not be able or even willing enough to help others. So even if we would like to replace our day job by “earning money online” it will not work.

It's a vicious circle:

- We cannot be helpful to others because we lack the time and creativity.
- We cannot quit our job because we feel we need some kind of funding to survive.

There are of course ways to simply tell your boss “I'm leaving” and then to take off with a bit of savings into a “new life” but that's not for everyone. If you are courageous enough, congratulations!

But most of us have been indoctrinated into accepting society's expectations and fears that “we will not survive without our current job” which is completely hallucinatory.

This is why I suggest that we shift ourselves gradually.

It all starts with the right social relations. This is the entry point.

All other paths follow from there.

Even if you are right now locked in some kind of job which doesn't give you much time, don't waste those remaining few hours in front of the TV.

And if you **do** turn on the PC don't lose yourself in watching distracting videos or hitting your “refresh” button in your email application to see if you're already a millionaire.

Instead:

- **Start connecting to other people!**
- **Observe and express yourself!**
- **Listen and learn from others.**

It will eventually give you the fuel to make the necessary adjustments in your own life based on where *you* want your life to go.

Whatever path you pursue, be it financial freedom, more peacefulness or living and traveling around the globe

It all starts with connecting to real people.

Thank you for reading

Contact: amindfulguidetoonlineliving@gmail.com

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