



How to Make the Right Life Choices

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Everyone is at a crossroads each moment of each day – it’s just that we never stop to reflect on the fact that each minute decision we make can have life-changing consequences. A client recently recounted a story from his youth. He told me about he used to hang out with his best friend – and his best friend’s girlfriend. One Sunday afternoon, rather than doing his usual thing of going to the rugby club for a few pints, he decided he’d call to the girl’s house for a chat. The rest is history – they were married twenty years just a few days ago. As he said to me “If I hadn’t taken a right turn out of my house that Sunday afternoon, we wouldn’t have married, my three children wouldn’t exist and I probably wouldn’t have been propelled along my career path the way I’ve been, given that my wife has helped me so much and been so supportive.

Little choices we make thoughtlessly, mindlessly, change the very course of our life. You’ve made those choices – so have I. And, yet, the vast majority of us make those choices completely unwittingly, paying little or no attention to the consequences of each of our actions. Only the very few – what the University of Chicago might term uncommonly successful people – have the presence of mind, the self-awareness, to realise the importance of the moment – every moment – and, in doing so, are all the more likely to choose their actions reflectively, mindfully. The converse, for what the same university might call “normal people” is that we continually create lives that, at best, are “not too bad”, by not being mindful of the opportunities that each moment can potentially create.

As I tell my many clients, the people who are most important to you in your business and personal lives at present were once complete strangers to you. The logical conclusion we can draw from that blindingly obvious statement is that we never know when we are going to bump into the next stranger who will assist us further on our journey. Normal people interact with other normal people and situations without this realisation and, therefore, their life’s journey can rarely be described as exciting. Most normal people plod through life on what they perceive to be almost a pre-determined treadmill. People brought up in working-class environments usually go on to lead working-class lives. Where I live, village artisans – plumbers, carpenters, masons – usually bring future village artisans into the world. The same goes for most people.

Abnormal people interact with normal people and situations in a totally different manner – ever present to and aware of the potential that each new encounter can hold. The difference between

these normal and abnormal people has nothing to do with socio-economic background, nothing to do with education, nothing to do with their friends. The difference is simply to be found in their state of mind. Research indicates that many abnormal people instinctively operate at this level – in these cases, their early upbringing may well have had a positive impact (or a negative upbringing might have spurred them into alternative action). But not all abnormal people are “made that way” – we can all be abnormal, we can all re-learn the ability we innately possessed as children to meet and greet each new person and each new situation with a childlike open-mindedness.

And therein lies the secret to abnormal happiness and success, far beyond the perceived pre-determined routes on which most normal lives meander. We simply need to re-learn to be attentive – not seeking out, searching for or hankering after life’s next opportunity, but simply fully attentive to and mindful of the present moment, the here and now, the only time and place we have.

Psychological research, quantum physics and the age-old wisdom of great minds all converge on the importance of paying attention. Your ability to pay attention is directly linked to your ability to be abnormally happy and effortlessly successful. And all it takes is a little commitment on your part to deliberately pay attention to small things in your life – so that the big things in your life will follow. By way of example, I invariably suggest to my clients that they shave or brush their teeth with the hand with which they do not habitually perform those mundane tasks. This has a double effect – because in deciding to do such a repetitive and habitual task differently, we realise, in that moment, that for every mundane and repetitive task in our lives, we have a choice – moment to moment. That, for many is the only revelation they need. But there’s more because, in doing something so simple differently, we are compelled to pay that simple task more attention. And paying more attention is the key to the life your heart desires.

So, you can take the first step on a journey of discovery that will change your life right here, right now. In doing so, you will realise that the choice between abnormal happiness and success and the mundane alternatives is not a matter of luck, education or social status – it is simply a matter of choice. Your choice.