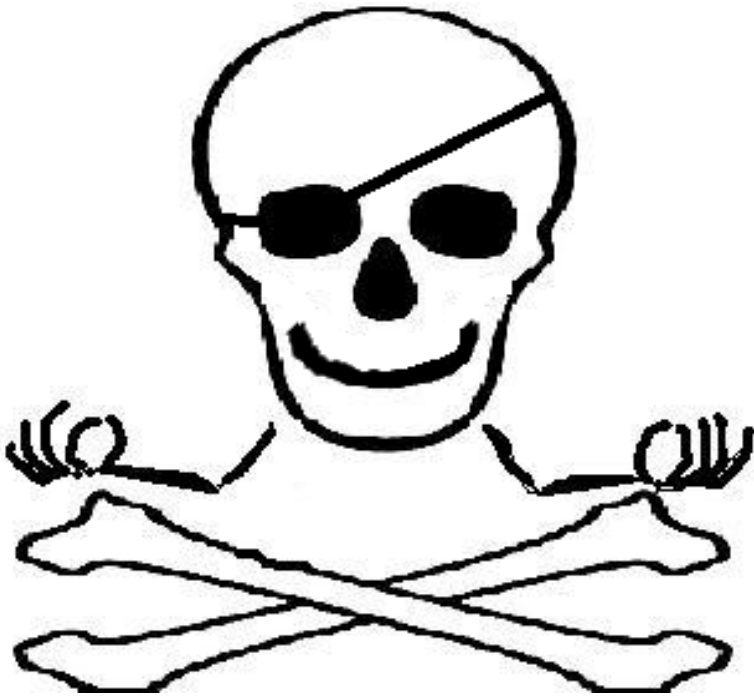


Get Life Or Die Trying

A Guide to Life before Death
for Teens and Other Crazy People
Version 1.1

By Dead Zen



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First of all, ask yourself...

Are you alive?

Really alive?

Take a moment and check your pulse. Think about how you've spent your last week. What have you been doing with yourself?

Was that time spent really living? Or acting like you're already dead?

Many people, young and old, think they are alive, but they are not.

They are zombies.

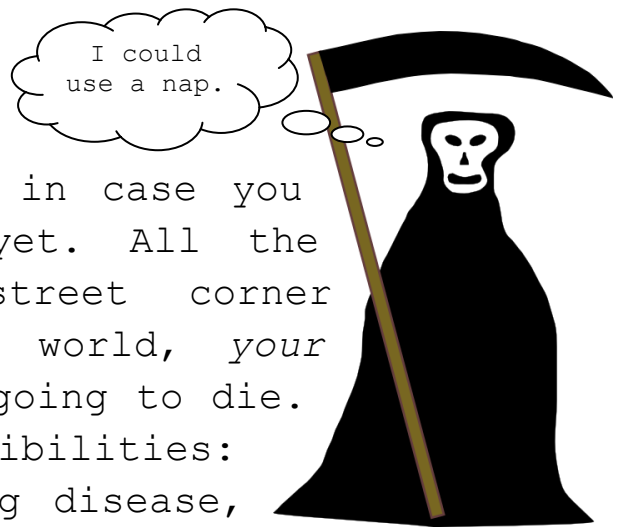
Walking dead.

They've quit caring, trying, doing.

Give Up and Die, but never Quit.

WHAT! GIVE UP AND DIE? Sure, here's how it works: when you **GIVE UP** everything that does not matter **AND** remember you will **DIE** (in the next minute, decade, or century), then you can start to really live. It's what all the great philosophers have been telling us. Imagine yourself as a ninety year old man sitting in a rocking chair. What advice would you give yourself!

The Hard Truth



Let's get this over with, in case you haven't figured it out yet. All the doomsday prophets and street corner preachers are right. The world, *your* world, is ending. You are going to die.

In fact, here are some possibilities:

- A very painful decaying disease, like leprosy, will consume your flesh (though, it's unlikely).
- You will fall into a frozen lake, get trapped under the ice, and suffocate in frigid water.
- There's an electrical shortage in your house which starts a fire and turns you into a charred piece of meat.
- If you're young, you're most likely to die from an accident, probably from doing something stupid, like playing highway chicken with a friend while texting and putting on makeup (so don't try it).
- You could also kill yourself, but don't do that. If you really feel that bad, talk to someone right now. Otherwise, suicide will be dealt with later.
- If you're older, an adult, your main options for dying still involve stupid things you do to yourself, mostly related to food, booze, and cigarettes. Your own heart will get sick of being treated like crap, and therefore quit, killing you.

Bottom line: 150,000 people die a day. Your turn is coming in the next minute, decade, or century.

Take a moment and imagine yourself lying in a casket. Watch as the top comes down over you, locking you inside the dark, airless chamber, while your family and friends stand around and resist the urge to check their phones. Within hours, you are lowered into the ground. Dirt is dumped on top of you. A headstone is dropped down to mark the place where you will be forgotten. Your body stiffens and begins to rot. Bugs and worms appear as if out of nowhere and commence their feast. Your pretty eyes quickly get chowed like grapes at a picnic. You're distinguished nose falls off. Your flesh melts away from your bones. Quicker than you can say "pass the ketchup" there is nothing left. You're gone.

It's going to happen, almost certainly, in roughly the next ten minutes or ten decades.

Once you're in the casket, all your friends and family are going to stand around in a funeral parlor drinking punch, crying, and telling lies. They'll say a bunch of nice things, like, *he was the coolest guy, she loved life, he always made people laugh, she had a pretty smile*. For now they will be nice enough not to mention that you were sometimes annoying, you chewed too loud, you never shared, your breath stunk, and your dog was ugly, etc.

Most people are nice enough to just think that stuff.

For now, congratulations. If you're reading this, you're not dead. Yet. So what? Now is your chance. You've got at least a few seconds, hours, or

decades until a terrorist blows up your plane, or, more likely, you text while driving, crash, and die; or, less likely, a vending machine falls on top of you while you angrily try to get that bag of chips. Here's a little activity for you to think about. Draw a big letter T on piece of paper. On one side, write all the things you want people to say at your funeral (not out loud, cause that's mostly crap; but silently in their hearts). On the other side, write all the stuff you will have accomplished by that day. That's a good start.



By The Way, You Already Don't Exist

Here's a little surprise. Not only are you for sure about to die, any second, any minute, any decade, but you, the you think you are, already barely exists.

Let's take a moment to think about who you are. Really, what makes you, you?

The body? Are you your physical body, your chiseled muscles, well-groomed hair, and magnum-sized parietal lobe (that's in your brain, not your pants)? Sure, you are those things right now. But every single cell inside you will be replaced in seven years. You'll be brand new! In not so many years, your body will be much different: old and

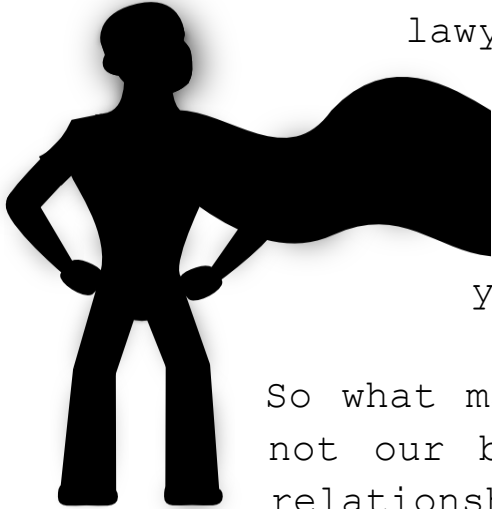
beaten up and falling apart. Physicists actually say our body is mostly space. Doctors say our body is all water, which flows in and out of us. And what if you lost your arms, or legs (or both). What if you lost your ability to walk or talk or see or hear? If you became a blind and deaf paraplegic, would you still be you? Of course (only shorter and quieter). You can go from fat to skinny to broken to whole to legless to buttless and still be you. So you are not your body. The body changes. You remain.

What about our Brain? Our Mind? Our ideas? Our beliefs? Some people with very rigid beliefs think they are their ideas. I'm Christian. I'm conservative. I'm a democrat. I'm purple. I'm smart and think certain specific things that will never change. But they do. People change their minds about a million times over the years. People change religions, political parties, and philosophies all the time. A scientist might devote his whole life to the idea that the earth is flat, only to find out, on his deathbed, it's round. So you can't be your ideas and beliefs. Those change too. Every day, we change our mind.



Are we our Memories? No, we can't be our memories, because we forget things all the time. If we lose a memory, or forget a few years of our life (as some adults have forgotten most of their college years), do we become a different person? No. We are not our

memories. We also are not our plans, our hopes, our dreams, because these all change, too. Yet we remain.



So we must be our roles! Sister, father, lawyer, nurse, tights-wearing sidekick. But we're not. We all quit or get fired or dumped or grow up and move away. Then what? In fact, if you think you are your job, you better quit now.

So what makes me me and you you, if we are not our bodies, our roles, our ideas, our relationships, our minds, and our beliefs? Are we a set of basic characteristics? Let's go back to the funeral. Are we all that crap people say in eulogies: loving, friendly, full of life, a "great" guy or girl, a good dad or mother, a kind friend, a man with nice hair, and so on. Is that who we are? No. That changes too. And not only do people lie at funerals, they fail to mention all our bad stuff: he was mean-spirited; she was jealous and obsessive; his feet smelled like dead skunks. All these traits contradict each other, and they change. We can be the kindest person in the world one minute, and then suddenly a dick.

So what's left? You are something, aren't you? A soul? A hole?

It's scary and liberating. Maybe you can be whatever you want. Maybe you should take yourself a little less serious. There is something very unique, priceless, and eternal about you. But what

is it? On a piece of paper, draw a stick figure of yourself. Make a list of all the things you think you are: what defines, describes, explains you?

When you're done, cross out all the stuff that will or could change in a lifetime. What's left? Hmmm?

Oh Yeah, and You Will Be Forgotten

Wealthy and powerful people often talk about leaving behind a great legacy. The truth is, you don't leave behind much but fertilizer in the ground.

There's the famous Rockefeller Center in New York, named after John D. Rockefeller. That guy got his name attached to a bunch of stuff. He was mega rich. There's Michael Jordan, who is known around the world as a great pair of shoes. (I think he used to be a good basketball player, too.) There's Einstein and Ronald McDonald and great writers like Mark Twain (wait, that wasn't his real name; so what's his legacy?). Anyway, we know all sorts of famous names. But do you really know these people? They left lots of stuff with their names and faces attached, but we don't really know who they are. You and I have no idea what it would be like to sit down to dinner with John D. Rockefeller. I heard he was a hard ass. Either way, the actual guy is forgotten. Every now and then someone reads a book about him or mentions him in a speech, but they don't know him.



You will be forgotten too. Your friends and family will remember you for a while; and the cool part is, once you're dead, they'll only remember the good stuff. Your name might even stick to something, a building, a wall, a baby you made. But you will be dead and forgotten.

It could be worse. Your name might get destroyed. Look at poor Conrad Hilton who spent his life building a respected hotel chain. Now his name reminds us of a spoiled rich girl who made some very inappropriate videos. I'm sure there were a lot of nice Hitlers and Dahmers before Adolf and Jeffrey rolled around.

The point is, don't worry about legacy, about posterity, about getting your name stuck to a bunch of kids and buildings. None of it will matter when you die. Why? Because you'll be dead and forgotten. Even the most famous people of all time, like Jesus, only get talked about occasionally (about once a week), and often out of context, and very often in an unfriendly way ("*Jesus Christ, Tom, keep your hands on the wheel!*"). So don't worry. Think about right now. Right now really matters. What is your current legacy? That's what matters. What does your name mean *right now* to your friends, family, school, job, and most importantly, to yourself? That's your legacy. You can stick your name to a kid you made, but if you're not a good parent, it won't matter.

Try this: Make a list of the most famous people you know. Which ones do you really, really know? What's

their favorite color? Who is their best friend? What do they like to do in their free-time? You probably don't know them at all. They're just a name, a character in Hollywood or in a textbook; in the end, they'll be dead and forgotten.

Cheer Up, Death Is Your Buddy

Okay, so we've figured out you are going to die soon, and once you die, you will be forgotten, and before you die, you barely even exist (at least the you you think you are).

Are you ready to give up? Good, because it is time. Give Up! Yes, give up all that garbage that's keeping you from being who you are supposed to be. Give up all that attitude, fear, drama, posturing, worry, blame, and anger that gets in the way of who you are. Give up all those time suckers and negative habits and wasted moments that are taking up the energy you should be spending on your passion, your mission, your purpose, your path.



Give Up and Die! Or to quote the great philosopher Keirkegaard, "Death will find you. But seek the road that makes death a fulfillment."

When you GIVE UP all the crap that doesn't matter AND remember you will DIE, then you can start to

really live. That's what Get life or die trying is all about.

So what doesn't matter? Anything that gets in the way of you pursuing your mission, your passion, your purpose in life. Yes, there are some things that matter, that really matter. And sometimes our greatest life's work is trying to figure out what those things are. Don't quit or give up until you find your passion, your mission, and do it.

What matters to you? Make a list. Who or what would you risk your life for? What things in your home, would you rescue from a fire? What ideas and values do you most believe in? What things do you most enjoy doing? What things do you do that you find the most meaningful.

Why Give a Sh*t? Part One: Suicide

Before we move on to more positive stuff, we should deal with the obvious question. Why give a sh*t?

There are several ways to look at the certainty of death. You can decide that since it's coming for sure, why not speed up the process. Yes, you can kill yourself. People do it all the time. It's not that hard (though, quite a few people screw it up). You can take pills or blow your brains out or jump off a bridge. But that's kind of like deciding not to play a game because you think you'll lose. What if you are destined to be the biggest winner of all time? You lose all the games you don't play. Give up and die, but don't ever quit. There are other options.

Here are three perspectives on suicide, none of which are very pretty: Many religious people equate suicide with murder, and you get damned to hell for doing it. So you're basically killing yourself to escape an awful life by sending yourself to a worse one. That's really bad planning, like the New York guy who decided to protest motorcycle helmet laws by riding without a helmet. He died after flipping off his bike and hitting his head.

The Eastern viewpoint says that we are born into new lives based on previous lives, so by killing yourself, you're basically just asking to be turned into a turd or a skunk in your next life.

People who don't believe in an afterlife argue that this life is the only chance we have to live, because once it is over, it's over for good. Poof, black hole, gone, nothing. Now, with this in mind, suicide seems even crazier, because, well, why give up on your *one* chance? Why quit when you only have one shot?

There is a better idea than jumping out of a window and painting the sidewalk red: Kill Your Life, Not Your Self. Killing your life, not your self, is a chance to turn a really, really bad moment into a huge change. But first, a side note:

Suicide is not always a rational feeling. It's hard to use logic to talk someone down from a ledge. One of the smartest friends I have ever known killed himself. He had a beautiful kid he loved. He had a wife. He had a decent job. Things were not perfect.

Never are. But he was not thinking logically. He parked his car in a garage, shut the door, and sat inside it until his brain stopped working. It sucked. It still sucks. It sucks for his kid, his wife, his students, and, even for me, because he was one of my best friends. Now this guy was very unhappy when he killed himself, and he was not thinking clearly. And many people have had times when they are very unhappy and feel this tiny inkling or desire to end it all. Long walk off



short peer. See Ya. And if you really feel like this, get help now. Don't be ashamed or afraid. You're not alone. Call 1-800-SUICIDE this minute. Don't wait. Talk to a counselor at school. That's what they're paid for. Or tell a friend. And if you're *that* friend, tell an adult. Now.

But suicidal thoughts, as mild or major as they may be, are also great opportunity for transformation. And that, in the end, is what this book is about. Transformation.

Many great people have found that their worst moment of total despair was a turning point, a transformation. Modern spiritual master and bestselling author Eckhart Tolle had that kind of moment. He hated himself and his life so much, he decided he had no choice but to kill himself. And in that moment, he was transformed. Because if you are desperate enough to kill yourself, or are even desperate enough to consider it, then what can be so bad about trying out a few other things first?

Maybe before tying that noose around the old rafters, you want to try something a little less extreme, something like, *hmmm*: **Killing Your Life, Not Your Self!**

In other words, you want to kill yourself because your life is hell and you feel trapped. Well fine, kill it, the life, before yourself. Take a stake to your vampire, blood-sucking life and stab it through the heart. Then start again. You can start it all over. At twelve, fifteen, and even eighty. That's what life is all about, after all, changing, growing, and sometimes, starting over. Countless examples exist of men and women who hit total failure, total despair, and found this to be their turning point, their chance to start all over.

Here are some ways to kill your life, not yourself:

Move! You can move somewhere warmer or colder or wetter or crowded-er or open-er or happier. People say it's not good to live thinking that the grass is always greener somewhere else, and yes, I know people who are always trying to change things, move, find new jobs, get new cars, cut their hair in a new way, and it does not make them happy. Dead Zen says you should be happy at any moment anywhere all the time. But this takes practice, and it does not mean that Dead Zen will sit on the deck of a sinking ship. Sometimes movement is good, even necessary. Perhaps constantly changing, moving, trying new things doesn't always make people happier. But I know one thing for sure: those people who keep moving are happier than most dead people.

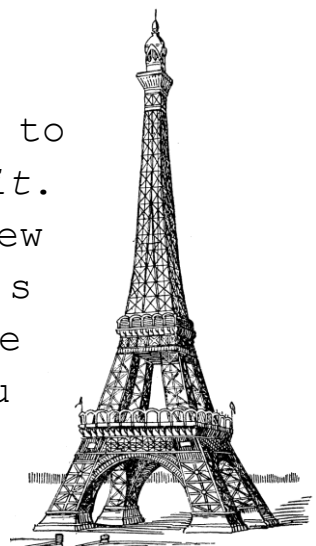
So if you're life sucks, and you can't bear the thought of living it, then move your life, change your life, find a new life, move out, move in. Don't you owe it to yourself to try all possibilities before taking that bottle of pills? Yes, do something crazy and drastic and insane and silly, but do it alive.

If you could, what would you change about your life? Where would you move to? What other kind of "life" would you like to try? Are those just dreams? Or real possibilities?

Kill Your Life, Not Your Self!

Turns out there are two types of suicide. The kind where you die, and then who knows what. Or the kind where you simply start a new life. Starting a new life, doing something crazy or impossible or different is a much better option than ending a life. You can do it, if you're old or young. Both have advantages. If you're old, you have freedom and nothing to lose. If you're young, you have time to try many things.

If you are over eighteen and you want to kill your life and start a new one, *do it*. Get up, buy a bus ticket, and move to New York or Paris or Cairo or a swamp. It's not that crazy. People do it all the time. Get a job waiting tables if you have to. Find a roommate. Start fresh. Why not? Killing your old life is better than killing yourself. Worst



case scenario, you die trying something new.

If you are not yet eighteen, and you don't have the freedom or power to just haul you're butt across the country, you still have options. Shave your head, make new friends, join a new team, club or youth group. Change schools if you have to. Take the bus across town and start over. Sign up for an online school. Why not? It's more fun than dying. You'll be the new girl with a shaved head. Ask to move into a relative's house for a while. Start applying for a college far away. Try wearing a unitard or a space suit. Honestly, think of all the crazy, fun stuff that could happen to you if you suddenly started wearing a spacesuit. Will people laugh at you? Of course they will. Will everything get better instantly. Probably not. But you'll be in a space suit and not dead.

Killing your life and starting again will be much more interesting than killing yourself. Think of it as a dare, a chance to be free, a great risk that could benefit you forever. Remember, with any adventure or mission, the worst thing that could happen is you die. And that's going to happen anyway. Why speed things up yourself, when you could find out what it's like to wear a spacesuit to prom!

So You're Still Alive? Why Give a Sh*t? Part Two

Now that you've really thought about dying a lot, we can get to the first main point of Give Up and Die Living. By now, Dead Zen hopes you're thinking something like this: Okay, I'm going to croak,

sometime soon (in the next hundred years or so), and until that happens, I've got this one chance, this one life, so I should make the best of it.

Give Up and Die really means: I need to GIVE UP all the crap that is not worth my energy and focus on the really important stuff before I die. I need to focus on my life to make sure I'm really living.

The scariest secret about life: There are a lot of people who are already dead. Sure, they're still breathing and eating and walking up and down the sidewalk with pets and pants, but something about them has died. They're working a job they hate or find pointless. They're watching other people live life every night on TV (ever notice that nobody on TV watches TV). They're using pills and drugs and booze to numb their brains. They're living miserably, waiting for that one week vacation in June when they get to go to a place like Disney World, where fun is manufactured like a fast food restaurant.

First, let's talk about TV. Dead Zen already said that nobody on TV watches TV. No, people on TV hang out with friends, go to coffee shops, play sports, do projects, invent stuff, get in trouble, ask good-looking people out on dates, work jobs they find exciting, and, in general, enjoy life, or, if not enjoy, at least they have a mission, a purpose. Is that why we like



watching people on TV, because they're doing real stuff in a fake world? Why don't we do real stuff in the real world? Dead Zen loves to watch kids play because, well, they are playing, living, laughing, dancing, enjoying life the way they should. Sadly, most kids are not out playing. Most of them are watching TV, for around 54 hours a week, almost 8 hours a day, watching other kids have fun. Meanwhile, they're dead.

Adults are even worse about TV. Many adults work a job they don't like, and then they go home and watch TV all night. But they don't watch kids playing on TV, or other adults being happy and having fun, like kids do. No! Adults mostly watch people kill each other on TV. Adults love shows about murders and wars and battles and blood. Why? Dead Zen is not sure. He thinks it might be adults' secret way of thinking about their own death. Of course Dead Zen thinks about death a lot too, and for some reason, this makes him not want to watch TV about people getting killed. He knows enough about death, so now he wants to go out and live.

Part Two of Why Give a Sh*t Part Two

But what's the living part that matters? This is where we can get in trouble, and perhaps end up taking a wrong turn into the badlands of life which Dead Zen likes to refer to as HSIGTDAIMAWJSIMMBASPAD (pronounced *Hsigtdie-mashimaspad*) and is an acronym for, **Hey, Since I'm Going To Die Anyway, I Might As Well Just Sit In My Mom's Basement And Smoke Pot All Day**. Dead Zen meets a lot of young people with this attitude.

Many young people hear Dead Zen talk and think: *hell, I'm going to die, and I'll be forgotten. and I don't even exist, and therefore it all doesn't matter, So, I might as well just sit in my mom's basement and smoke pot all day.*

Well, what are the pros and cons of living a drug-induced life?

Too Much of Anything Ruins Everything

Drugs are can be tricky to talk about. Of course, the big hitters like Meth and Crack are easy. Dead Zen has met a lot of people who have used hard drugs, and not many of them (none, actually) look back on their life and say, "Wow, everything got better once I started doing Meth." You can insert heroin, cocaine, and turpentine into this sentence and it still works. If you are hooked on Meth, you need help because if you don't stop, your life is going to suck. That's just a fact.

But Dead Zen hears a lot of arguing about pot. They say it's natural, not addictive, does not hurt your brain, or harm your health. They say our president did it. They say that states are legalizing it. So why can't I sit in my mom's basement and smoke it all day?

Okay, okay. I don't want to waste too much time fighting a war on drugs. We've done enough of that. Dead Zen has one thing to say about EVERYTHING that is like pot,

**"Too Much of
Anything
Ruins
Everything"**

including Cheetos, sex, and skateboarding: too much of anything is bad. It's the truth. Too much Thanksgiving Turkey and you fall asleep and miss the football game. Too much junk food and you get fat. Too much sugar and your teeth fall out. Too much beer and you get fat *and* land in rehab. Too much sun and you burn. Too much music and your ears blow up. Too much sex and you end up with diseases and babies you can't afford and getting kicked in the balls by an ex.

Too much of anything is bad. I'm sure there is an exception. Maybe there's a guy somewhere who is able to do heroin, drink tons of Mountain Dew, eat only chips, have unprotected sex, and still pass a physical and raise a family and keep a job and not die by the age of twenty-nine. But most of us normal people have to exercise a little something called self-control. So remember this foundational truth of life: **too much of anything will ruin everything.**

The Buddha was a smart guy. He saw this clearly. He tried both ways: he partied all the time for a while, and then he lived with absolutely nothing for a while. His genius idea was the middle path. A little bit of fun and a little bit of self control. This simple formula, which you can tweak for yourself, was the The Buddha's basic formula for enlightenment. D*mn! It's that simple? Nirvana is a matter steering yourself down a road between pleasure and pain?

Yes. Life, it turns out, is much simpler than we thought.

The route of total party-all-the-time, officially called Hedonism, or *Hsigtdie-mashimaspad*, will not result in happiness. It might feel like it for a little while, but it always ends in disaster and misery. You cannot fill your life with constant, drug-induced, party-filled pleasures. You will get sick and die, much quicker than you want. Over and over again, Dead Zen has been told stories of people who have tried to live 100%, 24/7/365 for pleasure, and have ended up miserable and dead. Sure, pot, Cheetos, and juggling may not be addictive, but if that's all you do, you'll end up miserable.



Real pleasure is much better, and it comes from finding your passion, your mission, your meaning, and doing it well. Your passion, your mission, your meaning might be dancing, writing, building, serving, street-performing. When you find it, you'll know, but you have to take the time to find it. In fact, you might have many passions and missions and meanings. And doing something meaningful is much better than 24/7/365 partying.

Fake pleasure is when you try to get all the good without any of the hard work. But life does not work like this. Life equalizes. There will always be work, and setbacks, and disasters. People win the lottery and get their legs chopped off in a freak accident on the same day. It happens all the time. Somebody gets rich, buys a yacht, and then drowns in the bathtub in the yacht. No matter how much pleasure you try to surround yourself with, it

will never be perfect. This is the trap of the addict, the shopaholic, and the thrill-seeker. Buy a toy, have a thrill, then get let down, and then buy some more. Get a girl, dump a girl, try again. Drink a beer, try a little pot, huff some paint, shoot heroine, build a meth lab in a trailer park, land in jail, then rehab, then dead.

Too much of anything ruins everything. Constantly seeking pleasure ends in pain.

What are some examples, from friends or family (or you), where too much of something good ended badly? What is something you like to do that perhaps you spend too much time on? How can you introduce some self-control?

So What is Give Up and Die Living?

Give Up and Die Living is simple. Find a passion, a mission, a meaningful thing that you *enjoy* doing. Maybe it's raising a family. Maybe it's wearing a spacesuit. Maybe it is traveling or engineering or writing or protecting your country or building skyscrapers or serving the poor or painting or teaching. The point is to find it. That's what matters. Then find a way to do your passion as much as possible and get paid decently for it. Work hard at it until you get good, maybe even the best. Then Repeat.

Don't try to save the world unless you're doing something you enjoy that saves the world. Dead Zen feels bad for people who work jobs they hate only because they "want to make a difference." If you

hate what you do, then you won't make a difference. Don't be afraid to enjoy yourself. That's key. If you enjoy knitting socks, good. Everybody needs socks. You're no less important than a firefighter. If you enjoy acting, then act. If you enjoy jello-wrestling, then wrestle in jello. Hopefully, the firefighter enjoys putting out fires. If he doesn't, then he's got the wrong job.

If you're lucky, you get paid to do what you enjoy. In some cases, you may have to do something else to get money while you do what you enjoy. In some cases, you may have five or fifty things you enjoy doing. Then you can switch things up and do them all. Dead Zen knows people who were happy making tacos, who later became happy starting their own taco shop, who later became happy starting their own clothing business, who later stayed happy working for a major design company. Start happy, end happy.

These are the essential questions.

What am I good at? What do I like to do? What am I passionate about? What would I do for free?

These are the wrong questions: what will get me the most fame, the most recognition, and the most money? Famous people are often miserable. Recognition often comes too late (your dead). And as far as money, that's a dead end. Dead Zen meets many young men who want to make it rich as street hustlers, but the truth is hustlers earn less than McDonald's employees and frequently land in jail or get killed. Many people who get rich lose their

money just as quickly. Just look at famous athletes, the most over paid people in the world. 78% of NFL players file for bankruptcy or face money trouble within two years of tossing their last football, and 60% NBA players are broke five years after their last slam dunk.

The best place to find your purpose is to start here:

I'm Good At	I like to:	I'm passionate about:

At the intersection of these three things is your life's purpose. If you don't have anything you are passionate about, anything you know you are good at (besides channel surfing and playing Xbox), and anything you like to do (besides smoking weed on your mom's couch in the basement), then you may be already dead. Check your pulse. Quick. You need to start figuring it out NOW. Get off the couch. Go out, try out, do, experiment, explore. NOW! Before you're dead for too much longer.

Give Up and Die...You'll Be Happy You Did

It is that simple. In fact, many people do it without even thinking about it. There are millions of people who find a job they like, get paid enough to eat, own a house, hang out with people they think are cool, marry someone nice, enjoy pleasures, like donuts and beer and sex (in moderation and with self-control), enjoy the

difficult moments, like diets and exercise, and end up living well.

It can be that easy. Give up and Die. Give up all the stuff that does not matter (worrying, failure, mistakes, popularity) all the stuff that gets in the way, and remember you will die, so start living.

So are you alive or not?

Bad Sh*t is Sometimes Good

Once there was a wise man who won the lottery. His buddy Todd said, "Dude, you are so lucky." But the wise man just shrugged. With the money from the lottery, the wise man bought his first car (he used to walk everywhere). On the way to the library in his new car, he was hit by a reckless driver and broke both his legs (and his car was totaled). His buddy Todd came to visit him in the hospital. He said, "Dude, you had some bad luck. You're going to be in the hospital for a long time." The wise man shrugged. That night there was an electrical fire in his house. It burnt down. His buddy Todd came to tell him, saying, "Dude, you sure were lucky to be in the hospital when that happened." The wise man told Todd to shut up.

It really is the truth that very often we mere mortals cannot tell good sh*t from bad sh*t. Life is full of examples of bad stuff that turns out to be good. Mistakes and failures that change the world and miracles that ruin us. Cars are great. Electricity is great. But if overusing them leads

to global warming and the end of the world, then that's not so great. As Shakespeare says, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

This does not mean you have to hope for bad stuff to happen and not enjoy the good stuff. But you have to remember that in life, the good and the bad are really essential parts of the same life.

Take a break from naming things good or bad for a while and just live the experience. One way to react to things without labeling them, is to say, "oh, that's interesting." Hmm, my boyfriend dumped me, that's interesting. Wow, I got an A on the test, that's interesting. Holy Cow, my eyeball fell out, that's interesting.

Think of one bad thing that happened to you in the past which turned into a good thing.

Sit Down and Shut Up!

Dead Zen has spent many years perfecting the art of doing nothing. Hundreds of hours he could have spent making money, eating tacos, playing with his toy ponies, or fixing the toilet, he's instead spent sitting on a floor trying not to think. Most the time he fails, and starts thinking about tacos or people in their underwear. But he does not give up.



And Dead Zen thinks you should try it. Why? Because meditation is *the* practice, universally used in most faiths and religions. Heck, even atheists meditate. The Buddha made meditation the centerpiece of his religion. Jesus was always running off to the desert for a forty day meditation break. It's in *The Old Testament*, *The Gospel*, the *Tao Te Ching*, *The Bhagavada Gita*, central to practices of monks, gurus, yogis, and cats. If there's one thing all religions agree on, it's that meditation can change you.

Meditation does not mean thinking about all the crap going on in your life. It is the opposite. The most common form of meditation is to sit, close your eyes, and focus on your breathing, letting all other thoughts fall away. Try it. It's hard. Very quickly your mind takes over and you start thinking about ice cream flavors, appointments, people in their underwear, or how you want your hair cut. So what's wrong with that?

Let's be honest and admit that most of what we think about is either pretty lame or total crap, or totally lame crap. Reruns. The same old fantasies or grudges or regrets or hopes. Worry about the future: What should I do? What should I wear? Or worse, rehashing the past: I can't believe I did that, she said that, or this happened. I'm pissed. I'm scared. I wish I could eat a hamburger and dance around in my socks. I wish I didn't, I wish I could. It would be one thing if our thoughts were original or interesting (and on some rare occasions they are), but mostly they're reruns. Literally, reruns. The same thought, again, and again, and

again. Watch your brain for a day, and notice how many of your thoughts are repeats. This is the monkey-mind.

Turns out, it's not the *not* thinking that has been a waste of time, it's the thinking.

So take a break. Every now and then, sit down and shut up. Do it for five minutes for thirty days in a row, and you'll be stronger, calmer, wiser, and happier. You'll be more in control.

One Question to Rule Them All

If you can live by this one question, then you will have no worries. The question is: Can I Fix It?



Yes, that's the question. When you make a mistake, or something goes wrong, or something does not feel right in your life, then you ask yourself this question. If the answer is yes, then stop worrying and go fix it. Duh. Find the most direct route for solving this problem. If you plan on fixing it later, fine, do that. But don't waste time with worrying. Fix it.

If the answer is *no* and it can't be fixed, changed, or altered, then your work is done. Why spend your time getting worked up about it? You can't fix it.

You failed a test. Can you fix it? No. Move on. Study harder for the next one. But if you have a test coming up, can you do something about that? Yes. Don't sit around worrying. Go and study. You

smashed up your mom's car. Can you take that back? No, so there's no use rehashing it over and over in your head. You cannot undo the car crash. But can you make up for it in other ways. Apologize? Drive better? Yes. That's where your energy should be.

Those are the only two types of situations that exist. There are only things you can change and things you can't. Focus on what you can change or do better, not on the past that cannot be undone.

Scientists say stress is something left over from the days when we literally fought for our survival. We had to run from tigers and hunt bears, and stress and adrenaline came in very handy. We still have stress, but it is activated by more mundane situations, like algebra tests and pretty girls. But in these cases, freaking out and running away is not going to help.

Either fix it or let it go. But there is no need to feel distressed over a situation you know you can fix, nor over a situation you cannot fix.

Try it right now. Think of a problem you have. Can you fix it? Yes, then do it. Put down this book and fix it. If No, then give it up.

Just asking the question can change everything.

END of SAMPLE