

36 Ways to Live Differently <https://chrisguillebeau.com/>

Life will be different tomorrow than it is today. “The only constant is change.” (Heraclitus, 500 bce) By regularly exposing yourself to new ideas and practices, you can learn to think and live differently. New ideas tend to build on one another. Consider how applying these ideas might impact your life. (Pay special attention to anything that provokes a strong reaction, either positive or negative.)

1. Learn to recognize the **hidden curriculum of life**. This refers to all the unspoken yet powerful norms we are expected to follow. Breaking these norms leads to social disapproval. (For a fun time, start breaking them and see how people respond. Face the “wrong” way in the elevator, tell people how you’re really doing when they ask “How are you?” and so on.)
2. **Get better at taking notes**. Find a system that works for you (there’s no one-size-fits-all solution) and use it every day. If you don’t write things down, you’ll forget the majority of what you learn. Use [spaced repetition](#) to reinforce what you learn.
3. Think about the political party or group you most identify with, and consider what you *disagree* with them about. Do the same for any religious affiliation, nationality, organization, and so on. You’ll never learn to [think independently](#) if you adopt a platform without scrutinizing it.
4. Your memory of the thing that happened is different from the thing itself. This is known as memory bias (there are actually [many different kinds](#)) and all of us are susceptible to it. One of the ones I think about a lot is the [peak-end rule](#): we remember the intense part of an experience the most and tend to discount everything else, even if the other parts were far more typical.
5. Stop trying to be “balanced.” **Balanced people don’t change the world**, nor are they particularly interesting. Be yourself, embrace the highs and lows, live a little.
6. Know the difference between [what you can control and what you can’t](#). (*Hint: most things you can’t*.) If you’re able to stop worrying about things you can’t control, this practice can remove many worries!
7. **Identify small purchases that make you happy, and don’t feel guilty about spending money on them**. Ignore financial experts who tell you to save by not buying coffee or minor indulgences. Those purchases are not going to make a difference in your longterm financial goals, but they *can* have an impact on [your immediate happiness](#).
8. When it comes to lifestyle improvements that cost money (homes, cars, etc.), **quit while you’re ahead**. Some improvements are helpful, but before long you start pursuing them out of habit. In fact, that’s a warning sign: when you start to want something despite a lack of evidence that it will make your life better. Beware!
9. Understand the principle of *loss aversion*: We tend to fear losses more than we desire gains. Keep it in mind when considering different options and risks. **Sometimes the most dangerous thing you can do is play it safe**.
10. When struggling with a decision, consider each outcome and see how it physically *feels*. This is a learned practice, and one that I was unable to do for many years. An early therapist kept asking me to describe events and would ask, “**How does this make you feel in your body?**” and I always gave an intellectual answer. The goal is to *find the somatic sensation*.
11. Trying to please someone with continually changing expectations is a surefire way to feel anxious all the time. Also, what doesn’t kill you [will probably try to kill you again](#).
12. Practice *selfish generosity*: **being a good human tends to lead to you being happier**. Do something nice for someone every day. Vary the people you choose and the “something nice.”
13. **Use tools to help you learn new things every day**. Example: I used to think book summaries were dumb, and then I decided to actually try them, especially for topics in the sciences that I had little knowledge of. All of a sudden, I found myself learning a lot in a short period of time! Now I have several apps available to learn something wherever I am.
[Castbox](#) | [Blinkist](#) | [Curiosity Stream](#) | [Coursera](#) | [edX](#) | [Udemy](#)
14. Avoid activities you pursue entirely for the sake of status or prestige. This will be your downfall—or at least it will leave you feeling discouraged.
15. **Relationships have a whole set of unspoken norms and patterns as well**. Notice them! What does your partner need? Who do you know that would benefit from you checking in?
16. Some people are naturally uplifting and fun to be around. Spend more time with them, and less with people who are negative and discouraging.

17. Exercise isn't always enjoyable, but feeling strong and healthy is. When you're trying to decide if you should work out, **think about how you'll feel after it's over.** [I put my running clothes out the night before I run.](#) If I'm traveling, I unpack my shoes and put them by the door as soon as I check-in. Make it easy!
18. **Comparison is the cornerstone of misery.** To be less miserable, and maybe even happier, [avoid comparing yourself to someone else.](#)
19. Be careful about watching any TV series longer than one season. If you really love it—keep going! If it's not at least a 9 out of 10, *stop*. As the saying goes, there are always more streaming services in the sea ... or at least, *online*.
20. Make a list of *what you know to be true*. Update the list once in a while as your beliefs evolve.
21. **Stick to a schedule most days, and once in a while, break it entirely.** Both are critical to success. Some of the most ambitious people live the most boring lives—they know what they need to do, so they keep their head down and focus on that. But if you do that *all the time*, you risk becoming stagnant and stuck in your ways. (Yes, this is one place where balance is needed.)
22. Serendipity is [luck + action](#). **To be luckier, take more active action.** Walk wherever you can. Take the stairs. When you have ideas, turn them into action steps and get to work.
23. There is almost always more than one way to accomplish something. Often the alternative options are easier, quicker, cheaper, or just *better*.
24. Walking away from a bad situation is always an option. If you don't like something as much as you thought, **don't be afraid to change your mind.** Ignore sunk costs! [Real winners quit all the time.](#)
25. Some people enjoy setting and enforcing limits for no good reason other than protecting their own power. Do whatever you can to dismantle these limits, both for yourself and for others.
26. Try to build relationships on shared *values* more than shared *beliefs*. Are you in a bubble that consists only of people with the same political and social beliefs? Quick test: if you can't think of many people close to you who disagree on serious issues, you're in a bubble.
27. **Never get your news from Facebook.** (Extra credit: stop using Facebook entirely.)
28. Successful people use systems. You don't necessarily need to get up early, meditate for ten minutes a day, avoid checking email in the morning, or whatever else the productivity trend is. Figure out how you do your best work, and then make any changes you can to support those conditions.
29. Try to remember that **everyone has experienced trauma and heartache of some kind**—or sooner or later it will find them. Keep this in mind when dealing with people you find annoying.
30. Learn to develop your [emotional intelligence](#). Self-awareness and empathy are not innate talents!
31. When you find yourself in an entrenched conflict, ask yourself, "[Do you want to be right or do you want to be free?](#)" Choose only one. Also: **the first rule of negotiation is that whoever cares more loses.** If you're willing to walk, you're always in a stronger position.
32. Without getting too serious about it, take personality tests to gain quick and useful insight about yourself. Chances are, you'll learn something even if they are not scientific. A few of the classics:
 - o [Four Tendencies](#) | [Sparketype](#) | [Myers Briggs](#) | [Enneagram](#) | [Five Love Languages](#)
33. Understand the role that ego plays in your life. Don't try to subvert it, try to identify when it's leading you into bad decisions.
34. You will generally be happier if you **don't try to change for other people or expect other people to change for you.** Most people do one or the other, and are therefore frequently disappointed.
35. Thinking through **survival scenarios** helps you get stronger. These can take on a range of situations: being stranded in the wilderness, or losing your job and savings account at the same time. [What would you do if...?](#)
36. Kindness is vastly underrated. **Everyone can be kind**—it requires no special skill or training, yet has an immediate, positive impact. It is perhaps the ultimate life hack.

This is what it comes down to:

- **There is always something you can learn.**
- **There is always something you can do.**
- **There is always a way to be kind.**

Learning makes you better, active choices help you live differently, and being kind can brighten someone's day while helping *you* feel better at the same time. When in doubt, consider those three possibilities and decide what to do next.