

A grayscale photograph of a woman lying on her stomach on a bed, working on a laptop. She is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and jeans. A smartwatch is visible on her left wrist. A tablet is placed on the bed next to the laptop. The background is a soft, out-of-focus bedsheet.

# LIFESTYLE DESIGN UNLEASHED

# How Technology Can Make You Free



Right now, most of us are not free. We feel free because we have the option to go where we want and do what we want... in theory.

But we're not truly free because our options are limited and ultimately we have to stick to pretty much the exact same routine everyday if we want to be happy, healthy and unstressed. Sure, you *could* call in sick and opt to just spend the day exploring or watching TV... but the consequence would be that you'd lose your job.

The other day I was watching a TV series called *22.11.63* in which the lead character can travel back in time to one day and stay for as long as he likes. Every time he travels back, it undoes what he did last time. And he's rich, because he gambles on sports matches knowing what the outcome will be.

In the first episode he walks around the town, gets a haircut, eats some food, buys a car, chats with the locals and explores.

Shouldn't every day be like that?

Shouldn't you have the option right now to just head outside and go and grab a bite to eat? To visit a famous landmark? To travel to the beach? To go to the gym for a workout?

How incredible would it feel to be *actually* free in this very real sense and to live the life you wanted?

But chances are that you *can't* do that. Either you're at work in which case you need to carry on spending all your time and energy on something that you're probably terribly impassionate about, or you're at home and don't have much time so you need to cook and get ready for tomorrow.

Chances are that you're grabbing a moment to read this between all the other things you have to do. This is your downtime and it's all you maybe have the energy to muster. Not free.



The biggest problem here is work. Most people spend 8 hours a day, 5 days a week doing a job that they don't enjoy and that they have no real interest in. And while 8 hours might not seem like a big chunk out of 28, it is when you consider you probably also spend 1-2 hours commuting, you probably stay late at least a couple of times a week and you sleep for 8 hours a night.

This now leaves you with about 6 hours of waking time. And seeing as you'll be getting ready in the morning, you can slash that down to 4.5 hours. And seeing as you need to cook, wash, tidy, pay taxes, call the bank, fix the boiler... that 4.5 hours doesn't go very far. And it also won't go very far because you're probably exhausted.

This is why so many of us struggle to start working out and stick to that routine. And it's why so many of us feel we don't get to spend enough time with our family and friends. It's why friendships fall away and it's why we don't have time to work on our master novel

we've been thinking of. We're just too exhausted during the few free hours we have to ourselves.

All we have is the weekends, during which we are probably committed to doing other things (weddings, stag parties, funerals, tidying) and which really isn't enough to do all of the things that most of us want to do.

And this would all make sense if you loved your job. This would all make sense if you had always dreamed of being an astrophysicist and now you are. But for most of us that is not the case. For most of us, our job is whatever we kind of 'fell into' when we left college/highschool. You probably started with whatever job you could get, whether that be logistics or underwriting and you probably then got somewhat addicted as you started to progress. You built up your life around the salary you got there and now you feel like you can't leave and still have the lifestyle you've come to expect.

What's more is that you feel as though you need to keep working harder and longer in that job. You've probably moved into a bigger house with bigger mortgage repayments, you've probably had children (which costs a small fortune), now you're probably paying for a child minder and a big commute and if only you had a little more money.

Meanwhile, dreams of one day becoming a rock star or a writer fade into nothing. Meanwhile, the idea of being able to decide on a whim to go for a stroll becomes an equally unrealistic fantasy.

And apart from anything else, work is *degrading* a lot of the time. You get told what you can and can't wear, you get told off for talking and you get told what you can have on your desk. Sure, some employers are a little more forward thinking than that but for the most part, being at work means being treated like a child.

This is all *not okay*.

But it doesn't have to be that way.



The thing is, that there are ways you can be free. Or at least that you can have the lifestyle you want. And all it takes is for you to flip your thinking on its head.

Largely, this is thanks to technology. But actually, lifestyle design has been possible even before the advent of the internet. The web just makes it easier than ever and this has been the catalyst for what has become quite a big movement.

The most obvious example of using lifestyle design to be free is to become a digital nomad. The digital nomad is an individual who has the freedom to go anywhere and do anything and who has achieved this because they work online. In other words, working online means that you can work from anywhere as long as you have an internet connection and a laptop. And if you designed your business model correctly, then your working hours can be flexible too. Therefore, the digital nomad is able to take their laptop and travel the world. They spend time working in the evenings in atmospheric bars and coffee shops, soaking up the sounds and the sights as people mill past.

During the days though, they can meet new people, see incredible sights, go snorkelling or hop to the next city. It's an incredibly exciting way to live and it exemplifies what lifestyle design is all about.

But actually, that's only one flavour of lifestyle design. This style of living certainly isn't for everyone and there are a lot of downsides – not least the fact that it gets somewhat tiring and lonely and it isn't terribly safe! Plus, you won't be able to progress your career

quite as easily as if you had an actual base of operations and the option to meet your clients in person.

You don't need to travel though in order to make the most of lifestyle design. Being able to work when and where you choose can simply mean that you're able to stop commuting into work, that you can work out of coffee shops or out of bed and that you can choose when you want to take a day off.

It means you can choose to walk out into the street, grab yourself a beer and enjoy watching the world go past while you soak up some sun. It's such a simple pleasure but it's what life is all about.

And it also means that you can decide that you're going to take the time to workout, or that you can book an appointment during the day before the bank closes. So many simple things are made better when you're in charge of your *own* life.

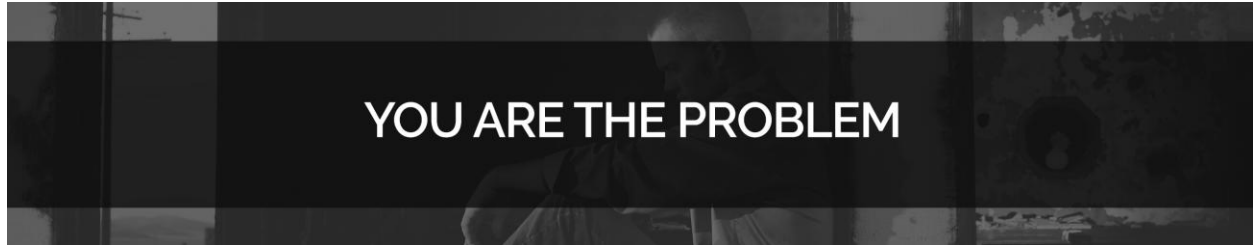
That's working online. But actually there are plenty of ways to do it *not* working online too.

For example, becoming a driving instructor can give you almost the same freedom that working online does. Now you can book the sessions when it's convenient for you and if you want to take Friday off, you just don't book any lessons then. If you want a bit more money, just book a few more lessons!

Or you could become a gardener, or you could just discuss flexi-time with your current employer so that you can come home from work earlier by going in earlier in the morning. Or so that you can work entirely from home some days if you log into the work systems.

The difference then simply comes down to the way that you choose your work. Instead of falling into your work and letting it dictate your lifestyle, instead you decide on the lifestyle you want and *then* find the work that will match that.

And often, that will mean just working less and being less conventionally ambitious.



It's easy in a book like this to start blaming 'the man' or 'the system' for all of the problems that we have. It's easy to think that your boss is the person who's preventing you from being free.

But in reality none of that is true. Instead, it's actually *you* who is to blame. You are responsible for your own freedom or lack thereof. But in your defence, this does largely come down to the way that you've been raised and the way your life has turned out.

That's because you've spent your whole life being taught that it's good to have a big 'work ethic' and that 'work shy' people are lazy and to be looked down on. You've been taught that success means wearing a suit and staring out of a window in a high rise office block.

And as we've already mentioned, the responsibilities and costs of living have gradually grown and grown and left you with little choice but to try and work harder and wish for a raise.

But none of this is necessarily true and there are other ways.

For starters, why is everyone so proud about working hard? That's understandable if it's something they love but if they're packaging lawnmowers... why be proud that you stayed an extra hour?

Of course it's important not to be a burden on society and to support your family. But there are plenty of ways to ensure you are earning *enough* money and past a certain point, your family will be *happier* just to see you more.

The big problem is that we equate success, we equate wealth and we equate importance to our careers. A lot of status comes from our jobs and it's a big part of our identity. That's why people often ask 'what do you do for a living?' as one of the first questions at any party or gathering.

But you never wanted to do this job in the first place remember! Why is this part of your identity?

The reality is that you can just as easily get a sense of reward from your hobbies. Why not work less and be less stressed and use some of your spare time to write an amazing book? Why not sell art? Start a business? Or become incredible at martial arts?

Why not get your sense of progress and of worth from the things you actually enjoy?

And here's the other thing: you can also earn money from those side projects. Your wealth doesn't have to be directly tied to your income. There's no reason that you can't earn money on the side and use this to become much wealthier. Likewise, you could teach piano in the evenings (at a time that suits you and without being told off for talking) or you could cut hair. Or why not rent out a room in your house to students? Or generate just a little online revenue?

Now that you're making more money than you get from just your main job and now that you're getting a sense of reward and of excitement from that; you can stop pushing yourself harder and harder in the office and staying until 7pm.

And suddenly, you can start thinking more about doing jobs that leave you with more time and more energy – rather than jobs that leave you with less and less time to enjoy your success the further you progress.





## WHAT DO YOU WANT?

But it's no good just wantonly trying to reduce your hours without reducing your salary (though that probably would make you a little happier). What's more important is that you try and create a set-up that allows you to live the lifestyle you want.

You need to answer the question: what do you want? Moreover, you need to think about the things that would make you just that bit happier on a daily basis.

And what you will probably find is that what you really want is already within your grasp. Most of us want to be 'rich' and 'successful' because we want to use that money to change our lives and live our dreams. What you'll find though is that in many cases you don't need that much money and success just prevents you from using your time how you want to...

For example, try to picture what life would be like if everything went perfectly to plan. Let's say you won a billion dollars in the lottery... what would you do next?

Some people would invest this money into their dream job: like becoming a recording artist.

But we've already seen that you can be whatever you want to be in your spare time. Just start recording videos of your singing and upload them to YouTube. If you're good, then you will get a big following and eventually that will lead to opportunities and the chance to pursue a career in this field.

If you want to be a writer, you can likewise just start writing more in your free time.

But what if your ideal future is just to have less financial stress? To be able to support your family without it feeling like you can never eat out and without losing sleep wondering how you're going to make the next mortgage repayment?

In those cases, then you just need to think about the best way to reduce your cost of living. Instead of working harder and harder and becoming more and more stressed (kind of counterproductive if stress is really what you're trying to reduce) instead look at how finding a job nearer to your home could help you to spend less on commuting. Or consider moving into a smaller home so you'll have lower rent/repayments. Maybe stop paying for Netflix and other unnecessary expenses – especially considering that there are tons of free channels you can stream from these days. And maybe, as suggested earlier, start earning a little extra by renting out a room in your home or doing a bit of work online.

And what if you want a beautiful, massive house? The answer might be just to invest more of the cash you do have into interior design and to reduce clutter. Investing in one amazing feature can make a big difference. And did you know you can install a beautiful 'office pod' in the garden for \$10,000?

Working harder won't help you to travel more: it will only mean you have less time. But there are some incredibly cheap ways you can travel more locally – why not go on lots of 'mini holidays' instead while you're young and healthy? Better yet: quit your job, travel for 3 months and then find another job! Or at least take a sabbatical...

And if you're working toward retirement then just stop and think about what that means for a moment: you think your *best years* will be when you're tired, achy and grey?



## CHANGE YOUR THINKING

A lot of this might seem scary though. I am proposing that you stop putting all your effort into working harder for your current job and instead set up a side business. I'm saying to take a break from your job, or to give up your job altogether and become a driving instructor or an online entrepreneur.

Scary stuff.

But this is all that's holding you back: fear of change.

The key then is to try and address that fear and find ways to deal with it. Ultimately, this means looking at why you're afraid and then finding ways to remove that fear.

Tim Ferriss recommends a technique called 'Fear Setting'. Here you list all your fears and then rate them on a scale of 1-10 on how likely they are to happen. Crucially, you then write contingency plans for how you would deal with your relevant fears.

Quitting your job for 3 months is scary right? You might never get another job? You might become homeless and your wife might leave you?

Either that, *or* you would most likely be able to easily find new employment after a month or so. If you didn't, your old work would probably take you back. If they wouldn't, then you could get a low-paying job in the interim. Or you could work part-time. Or you could start your own business just for a short while. Or you could live out of your savings. Or you move in with your parents.

I'm not saying that last one is desirable, I'm just saying that the *worst case scenario* isn't actually that bad. It certainly won't kill you.

All that's holding you back from the lifestyle of your dreams is fear. So just let go of that fear and go for it – live your life!

And for many more tips and instructions on how to work online, how to get more time in your routine and more, just check out the full *Lifestyle Design* ebook.