

Design Your Life: What Would You Do If You Had Nothing To Do?

What would you be doing tomorrow if you retired today?

Let's say you had a blank day staring at you. You didn't have to work. You could do anything at all (although money is still a limiting factor). What would your perfect day be like?



Photo by [Carol](#).

These questions are more than just hypothetical questions to ask for fun or idleness. **It's an exercise meant to get you thinking about designing your life.**

How do you design your life? Well, let's assume that your life is under your control. Sure, not everything is under your control, but let's assume that much of your life is yours to do with as you please. Even if that's so, many of us go through life doing what we do because a series of events have made our life what it is today. We continue to do what we do without giving it much thought, because it's easier that way.

Designing your life isn't easy. You first have to dare to ask yourself these questions. You then have to dare to imagine that it can come true. And then comes the difficult task of changing your life so that it is what you want it to be.

Perhaps your life is already just how you like it — if that's the case, you are to be congratulated. But I submit that many of us, while generally happy, have a life not of our own design — at least not a conscious design.

So today let's take a look at one way to consciously design your life. It's not the only way, but it's a path to happiness that I'd recommend.

Here's the process:

- 1. What's important?** Ask yourself what is most important to you. Regular Zen Habits readers know that I ask this question in many articles, but that's because any process should start with this, whether it's a process of simplifying, of productivity, of frugality, or of becoming happier. What do you love doing? Who do you love spending time with? Make a short list of 4-5 things.
- 2. What is your passion?** What do you love doing the most? Can it be a way you make your living? If you can make a career out of doing something you love, you will love your day. Dare to imagine that this could come true.
- 3. Design your day.** Start with a blank slate, and design your perfect day. Incorporate the short list of 4-5 most important things above, to ensure that you are spending your day doing what's most important to you. Also include time spent working at your passion (from item #2). Include an ideal routine, including a morning and evening routine, and everything in between. What time would you wake up and go to bed?

4. Figure out how to get there. What changes would you need to make in your life to make that perfect day a reality? Be willing to consider drastic changes if necessary. Come up with a plan to get there. It might be a plan that will take 6 months, a year, two years or 5, but you can get there eventually, if you want it enough. Dare to make it a reality.

5. Start making some changes immediately. Some of the changes can be done right away, especially if the changes are under your direct control. The time you wake up and go to bed, for example, are probably under your control. Your morning and evening routines are another example of things you can probably change immediately. Spending time doing the 4-5 important things on your list might also be an immediate possibility. Notice the things you normally do that aren't on the list of 4-5 important things — consider eliminating or minimizing the time you spend on the non-important things to make room for the important things.

6. Start making long-term changes now. Longer-term changes might include things like doing your passion for a living, or where you live, or getting out of big commitments that don't contribute to your happiness or are not on your short list of 4-5 things. But while these kinds of changes might take longer, they can still be done. Start on them today, set them in motion, and dare to believe that you can change these things. Make a plan, and set it in motion.

7. Keep the end in mind. Print out your perfect day, and keep that in mind as you begin to make changes. This is the life you designed, rather than the one you've fallen into. You are in control of your life, and you can have that life, if you want it enough.

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