

Escaping the Daily Grind of Life

By Matthew S. Chan

(Excerpt from "The Intrepid Way")

Because my parents were owners of a restaurant when I was young, and I often helped out behind the scenes by washing dishes, folding napkins, or wiping silverware, I was exposed to many types of people early on. There were the employees who came through ... as well as the customers. As I grew up, I began to notice many different things about people.

People of different ages seemed to pursue a life full of work and were constantly busy. In fact, there was all this talk of having a young man like myself looking forward to a life of going to school, then going to work in a career I would have to wisely decide on at an early age.

This message came through loud and clear ... repeatedly! Imagine my surprise several years later when I learned that people don't often work in the professions they studied for in school ... and not to mention that many of the courses taken by college students are frequently not used in the "real world."

What really disheartened me was the fact that so many people enrolled into a life of hard work, and they were continuously working in jobs they disliked until the age of retirement. When I glimpsed the future by watching the elderly, I actually saw a few who had in fact "made it." However, there were many more who lived diminished lives full of regret and fear of the remaining years they had left. These people discovered that the advice and the path they followed in their younger years did not work for them.

This created an early sense of unrest within me ... and it is partially why I spent most of my 20's driven to achieve and break the cycle of the future. Some people referred to their predicament as the "rat race of life" ... where people continue to run throughout their life. For me, I had a much more melodramatic view of it all. Today, I refer to it not as "running in the rat race" ... but as "grinding your life away" ... mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Sometimes people refer to their daily tasks as part of their "daily grind." However, I refer to the lifestyle of unhappily working until old age to sustain your existence in society as the "grinding lifestyle."

The reason I refer to it as "grinding" is because of the long-term toll I have seen in people of all ages. It could be the single mother in her 20's toiling day in and day out to support her two children. It could be parents in their 40's who have created a lavish lifestyle that requires such heavy financial, physical, and psychological maintenance that they are tired and trapped inside ... but are afraid to let anyone know about it. Or it could be the elderly person who continues to work because their retirement is insufficient to support themselves - much less their medical needs.

Both the young and old grind away year in and year out until they become only a mere husk of the inner youthfulness that we all have within. The innocence is long gone ... and all that is left is a cynical person - a broken person full of regret and total lack of purpose.

Instead of working to create personal freedom and wealth for themselves and others, people continue to follow the old programming to work for a living, work to maintain their lifestyle of "looking good" to impress everyone ... and they sacrifice their futures along the way.

As I write this, it does not mean that I don't work. It does not mean I don't want

to look good. However, what I am conscious of is that what I have built and continue to build allows for me to have a good amount of personal freedom ... where I can choose what I want to do and when I want to do it. Occasionally, I face the occasional grinding task, but I don't spend any more than two hours feeling strapped to any particular job or task. But I do have the freedom to break away or change what I want or need to at a moment's notice.

I am opposed to people spending their lives grinding away because I think all of us have the potential to become so much more than that. Most people have no time or wealth to possibly think about anything else ... yet they look forward to the next weekend where they can have a beer and watch a football or basketball game on television.

One of the biggest things I see with people trying to leave the daily grind is that they give the best time and energy that is available to their job. What happens is that they use any leftover energy and time in order to escape the daily grind.

I have transitioned from one career to another many times in my life. But during those times, I was able to use my spare time to successfully do so.

However, the leap from employee to self-employed or leaving one business to go into another business required me to take different measures. I used my spare time to do what I could to prepare myself for the transition.

Some people thought I worked too much. Well ... I called it "good planning."



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