



# YOU ARE NOT DEAD

A GUIDE TO MODERN LIVING

**You Are Not Dead: A Guide To Modern Living.**

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## Introduction.

In the present world of expectations and disappointment, hidden threats and clear danger, there are many ways to die, not the least of which is consciously—choosing death over life or surrendering in full consciousness and potential. You, however, are Not Dead. You are among the survivors, a quick study, awake and sturdy, an able individual who knows when to follow and when to fall behind. Neither soldier nor stranger to structured living, you play the game well, even if it disgusts you—trusting to be trusted, serving to be served, obeying to command to one day transcend, neither master nor slave, even to yourself.

But none of this is easy. Daily you encounter possibility—and daily, duplicity. Danger Disaster. You give in to things you know will harm you and give up passions when they get too hard. The deficit of gratification pushes you not onward but in tiresome circles. You deceive yourself. You willfully distract. With excuse after excuse you defend yourself when showing up late or not at all in your own life.

The world is scary—perilous and in peril. Social forces push you in uncomfortable places. Controlled political climates stifle and confound. You swear it's worse now than it was for your parents, and your children will damn you for the mess you'll leave behind. But the conditions have not and will not change—nor has or will the presentation.

But now more than any other Not Dead generation, you are aware of the presentation as a presentation—and you are sickened by the medium. The sleekness of the packaging. The slickness of the language. You understand the reasoning behind the machinery even if you disagree with it—but you cannot stop, escape or ignore it. Not because prosperity or disaster is just around the corner. Prosperity and disaster are here. The kingdom has come. The crisis is now.

Though perceptions have changed, biology and bureaucracy have not. You are ill equipped mentally, emotionally and socially, and civic instruction has not kept pace. Skilled with detecting condescension and deceit, you must approach dilemma with a system of honest inquiry. You must strive for wellness not with the premise that you want to be better or to perform your best, but with the acknowledgment you are broken and just want to be good. You want to be okay in this perpetual state of emergency. If you must wrestle—and you must—with truth and trust, artifice and agenda, the paranoia is founded and the trauma is real.

You want more than a series of attachments to and detachments from this world. You want understanding—and the assurance you'll be all right. *You Are Not Dead: a Guide to Modern Living* presents various methods to strengthen your grip on life—on Not Dead—by holding close security and keeping at bay besieging negativities. Find reprieve and optimize Not Dead with the twelve precepts explained in this manual: questions to ask yourself and attitudes to embrace that navigate and overcome these difficult times. In addition, listen as often as possible to the accompanying audio component. This uplifting soundscape not only soothes tension, it invites introspection and provides the inspiration the enormity of not dying requires.

You were past. You will future. Today, you are here. And You Are Not Dead.



FIRST

## 1. Where Do You See Yourself in Five Years?

No, this is not a job interview or date interrogation. But this question of projection that slows down and distresses so many in-the-moment modern thinkers is important. Not having a confident answer does not make you devoid of goals, but it does indicate a lack of deference for mobility. A destination dictates a course of action, without which your present self meanders and the future being you strive to become is never born.

Not to say you aren't trying. Your accomplishments are many and admirable. But when you fall short, you tend to cut the wound deeper with sharp thoughts and self-deprecation. Ensnared in a cruel yet common expectation, you are pressured to succeed but not instructed how to do it. How can you know where to place yourself—and consistently thrive—when hearing the demand for groundbreaking scientists and preeminent physicians along with no less dedicated, no less fully actualized line cooks, custodians and parking attendants?

In order to meet—and surpass—expectations, you must first adopt them. Pay more attention than you produce it, and don't be shy to sacrifice talent for stability. The conflict and decision between doing what you love and doing what is right is a difficult lesson to learn. Upon reviewing your situation, conclude where you ought to be and concentrate on the sure-fire, putting on hold or choking the untenable. If compelled to pursue the frivolous, at least ensure the payoff if achieved will be generous; in other words, exploit demand-driven ventures, don't chase hope-charred personal projects.

Schemes may not be foolproof—but dreams are proof of fools.



## 2. Five Years Ago, Did You See Yourself Here?

This perhaps is the real question—the contemplation of where you thought you were going and where you have ended up. To see yourself in the future or to regard yourself in the now, you must track where you were and how it relates to your previous plans....

You did have plans, right?

Even poor designs are better than none. Without a map to life, existence tempts death, lacking coherence and discernible milestones to indicate growth. With hope you not only had goals, they were exceptional, too—though perhaps not realistic, especially if just getting used to not dying. A five-year assessment commonly requires you to adjust your ideals to suit your current motivation.

If your accomplishments deserve congratulations, by all means, think highly of yourself, but do not bruise your ego if you know you have failed. It is even appropriate to reward the failure if by recognizing oversight you regard yourself in a new light—a light that wants to be brighter. Just don't claim disadvantage or conspiracy. Falling short is not your fault but nor is it anyone else's.

By examining the last few years of your life, you will identify the patterns that have been productive and those pale of merit and progress. Determine what factors contributed to these patterns so you can replicate or avoid them. What is wrong with you? What is right with you? What did you mean to change that instead changed you? What is left of you that you're proud of? What remains that you abhor? Why are you like this and why don't you care? Be honest with yourself and just cruel enough to force the needed change.

Remember: Even if you have been dead before, You Are Not Dead now.



### 3. The Advantages of Becoming a Landowner

Face it—you need money. Anyone who thinks “money is not a factor” figures with an impractical equation. You have basic wants to need, bills to pay, conveniences to lease and down payments to make. Divorcing yourself from the drive for financial stability dismisses reality and any hope to one day keep a more than minimum level of comfort.

It’s okay to want things. It’s also okay to get them. Acquiring goods and services contributes to your identity—not through “things,” but how you choose to spend your money. You vote with your dollars for the materials you enjoy and the modes of manufacturing that align with your values. You also shine true with your keen shopper savvy, hunting down bargains and capitalizing on discounts that allow you to purchase even more.

Groceries, vehicles, clothing, appliances—all of these are meaningful transactions, but the greatest satisfaction comes from buying a lasting home. Though it may sound uncouth, nothing can compare with acquainting yourself with the soil of your own land, smelling the dirt and sensing the solid weight of the earth behind you. Owning property is a fundamental human impulse that not only provides shelter and establishes a sense of belonging, it restores the dignity the quest for money dissolves.

If money is the root of evil, we are the devil’s sharecroppers.  
Someday you will buy the farm.



PAYIL



## 4. Paxil and Other Agents of Change

War. Poverty. Violence. Human misery. All have existed since time began. The present day gives you in addition the constant threat of terrorism, rising insurance premiums and job insecurity. Fear and uncertainty have become ways of life and detriments to Not Dead—and it depresses. You may argue that it is society that needs fixing, not you—don't treat the symptoms, cure the disease. But you alone can't solve the world, and add to social stress the personally anguishing: the misplaced love, the lost aspiration, the feelings of worthlessness and alienation, increasing tensions and misunderstandings with coworkers, family and friends. But it is not a crime to feel anxious or hopeless. What is criminal is not trying to quit.

Alarmingly, for many, continuing a life of pain appeals more—is safer—than confronting the social stigma of mood-improving drugs such as Paxil, Xanax and Zoloft. Those who suffer are more concerned with insisting they're okay and normal than striving to be okay and normal. But what exactly is the stigma?—besides the phenomenon of disgrace for thinking and feeling to the point of despair. Before acquiring an abstract meaning, stigmas referred to physical anomalies—boils and lesions that riddled a body and indicated disease, which warded off the healthy for fear of contagion. What do you and a leper with gaping holes have in common? What, precisely, is your stigma? Surely not trying to help yourself feel better, think more clearly and act with poise. No—it's stumbling about with a sick heart and bleeding mind.

Put away those bad feelings. Prevent those bad thoughts from happening.

You Are Not Dead.  
Stop pretending that you are.

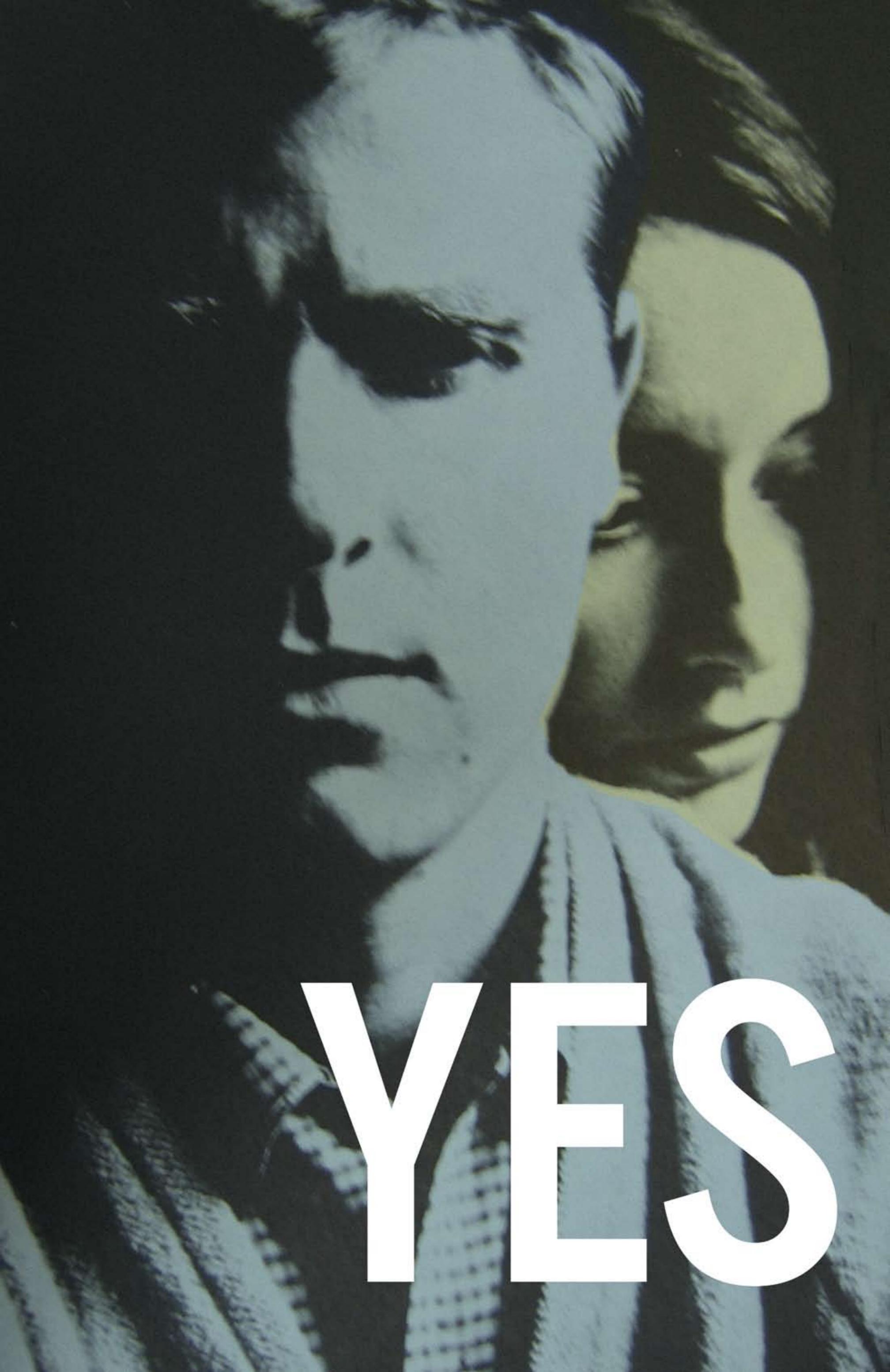


## 5. The Risks and Benefits of Mediacation

Whether you can name more senators than professional athletes or identify deeply with the reality on TV, diversions abound in everyday doing, and they can overwhelm. Daily Not Dead requires escape, and television, newspapers, the Internet and more provide ample outlet for media medication. Consuming infotainment calms you down and cheers you up after unpleasant days at the office—not to mention hurries along the awkward hours between the end of the workday and bedtime. Besides, who doesn't want to be in the know? If others must constantly fill you in, your not paying attention can jeopardize their favorable opinion of you.

But what if your escape becomes the place you're always at? What if you need to escape your escape? Can you be sure you even want to? Ambivalence is a common response to that which allays and excites but also distracts—sometimes at the expense of what you think you should be accomplishing, even if that something is figuring out what it is. If this is the case, change your media. If always watching a particular channel, give another one a try, swap the television for the Internet or pick up some movies from the video store. You may even read a magazine. At the first sign of irritation—unrest, fatigue or inordinately disorganized or absent thoughts (“the blahs”)—switch it up. Experimentation will ensure a healthful balance.

Media informs so much about the world and about other media, and also about your attitudes and preferences. It would be destructive and distasteful not to want to know more about you.



**YES**

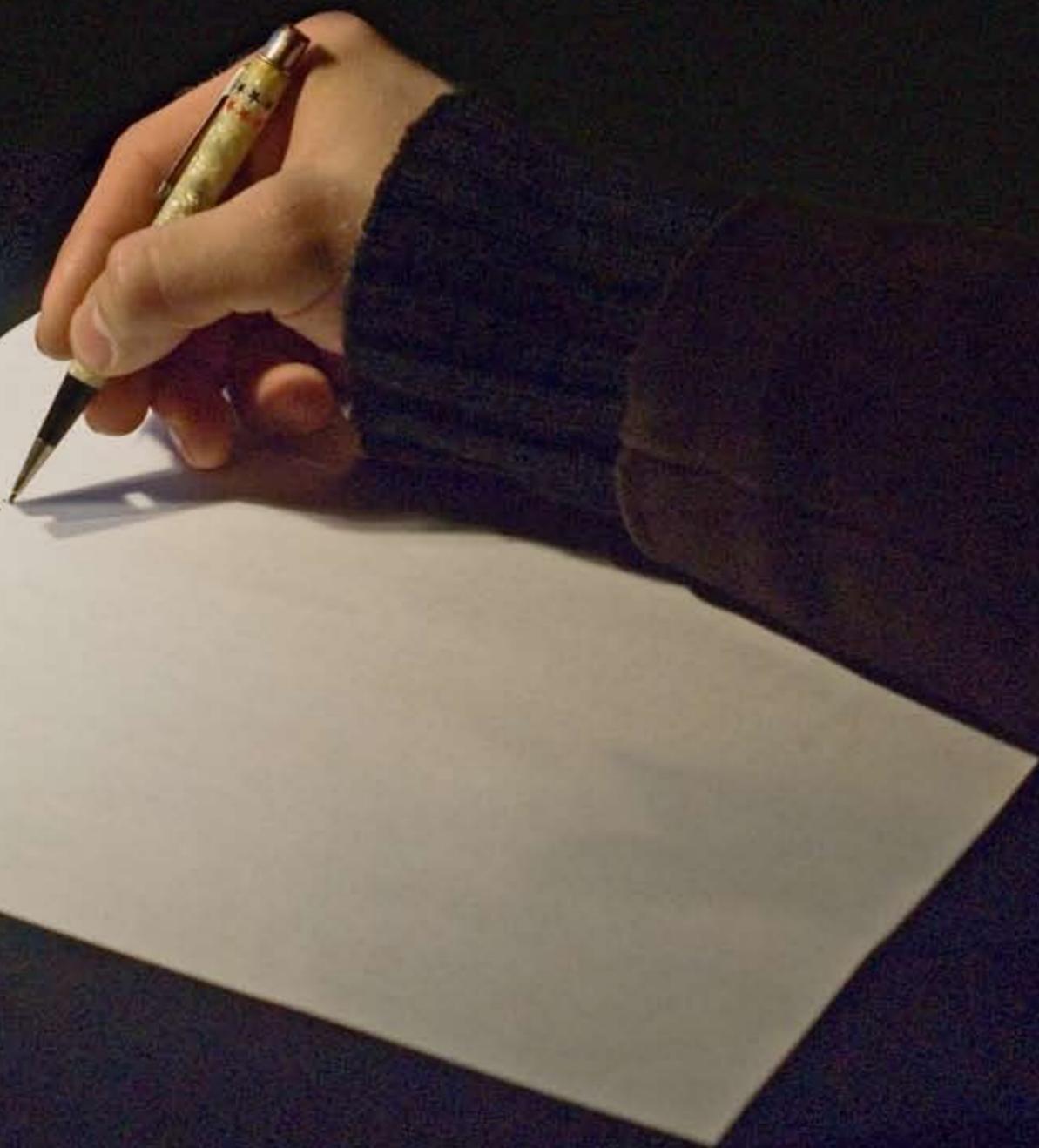
## 6. Declaring Your Codependence

Love is a many splintered thing. Dalliance, dating, seduction, rejection, all lead to elation or darkest woe. Perhaps you have been the target of a stray arrow, or worse, have fallen for someone who doesn't know you don't exist. You may have progressed deep only to endure—or commit—equally deep transgressions, slashing hearts, shattering lives, abusing emotions and causing irreparable harm to one's capacity to trust ever again and/or cope with existence in general.

But after a careful search for a suitable match—a trial of process, error and compromise—you may be inspired to make a declaration of codependence. Go for it. You benefit losing personal freedom, but you also risk finding happiness and peace of mind as you share with your tolerated one your troubles and anxieties then feel them fall apart with the power of empathy or get demeaned to the point where you don't discuss them anymore. That's not so terrible, even for the selfish, and commitment isn't about increasing your burden by taking on another's, but exchanging support and helping each other achieve joy. What better way of making it serious than making it known?

So exchange those vows. Give misery its company. Practice affection and positive reinforcement. Lives will get messy, but we all know one vacuum cleaner is cheaper than two. Besides—there is *nothing* you can tell your heart to make it die.

To WHORA ST MARY COLLEGE



## 7. Note to Self Delusion

You cannot save the world. You are not a victim. Your tragic flaw, if compelled to choose one, is not ambition. You can find better... and worse. Throughout history, lunatic notions have led to lasting contributions in science and mathematics, even philosophy. What farfetched and fantastic idea isn't considered chimera until the moment it becomes reality? At the level of the individual, however, overloaded with unfocused desire, an implausible dream impedes personal growth, suffocating as much as it offers hope.

Delusions offer transport and deliverance, prospects more appealing in theory than fact. Why else would you worship the door but fear to turn the knob? They become, unwittingly, the events in your life, the points of demarcation: before this falsehood, after this fantasy, making the timeline of your life a lie. Investing energy into a delusion, whether one you wish to come true or a past slight you feel hobbles you, distracts you from creating a real event in your life—one not confined to your ingenious but fractured mind. The rest of you keeps not dying, accommodating the farce and accepting the deception as a part of who you are. And it is a part of who you are. But is it a part of who you want to be?

A delusion is an injury you insist on having. Stop hurting. Demand healing. And if you think your delusions are risks worth taking, then confront them right now—not when you feel ready and certainly not when convenient for the fallacy. Don't decide to take a chance, take it, leap—open the door and find out, even if forced to close it and move on. You'll feel better eventually.



## 8. What to Watch When the War Is on TV

Though distant and indistinct, armed conflicts in foreign countries play to your emotions in profound ways. You may find yourself frustrated or experience immense pride. You may feel angry, sorrowful, pragmatic and doubtful all in one sound bite. Whatever your reaction, the disparity that exists among your fellow citizens, family and friends included, causes enormous tension. The politick tick tick takes its toll (while the death ever increases) and takes its polls to prove we are divided, as a nation, undecided, and lest we choose wrong, we continue this direction while the right write checks and the left behind march.

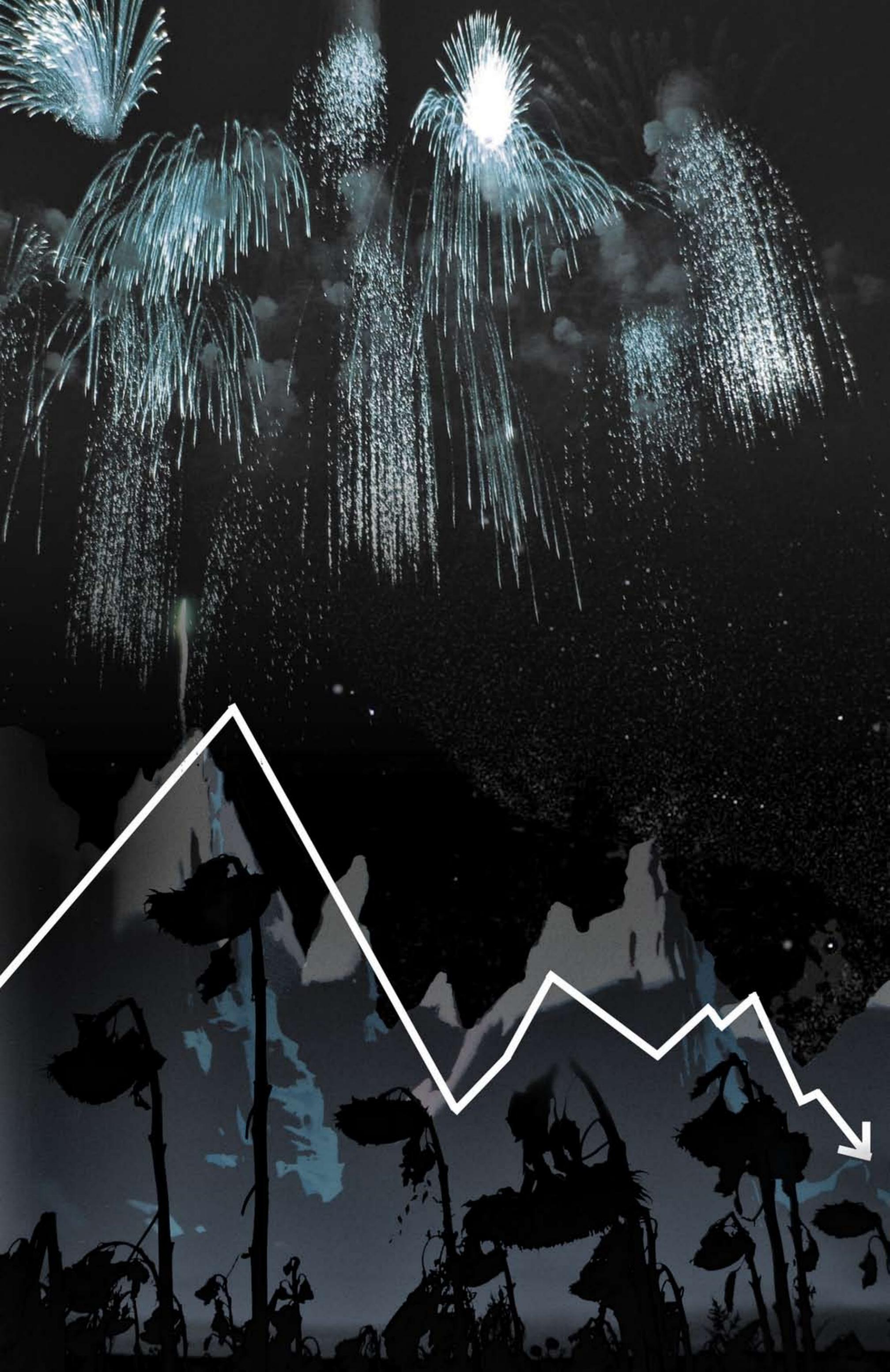
It is easy to detach yourself from people you disagree with. It is not so easy to forget or resolve why you're so at odds in the first place. What do you do when bombs are dropping, cities toppling and bodies stacking up, naked in pyramids and dead in desert heaps? What do you watch when the war is on TV?

Watch approval ratings like a playing card empire rise and fall and rise again. Watch your words in unknown company and also with loved ones who are forever dear but confirmed ideological enemies. From your safe distance, in your comfortable existence, watch the pain dry and the grass grow greener.

You Are Not Dead. You're not luckier, more important or more fit. You're just smarter. Let others die for your signs, your signification. They will. They must. You are not just better off not dying—you are better off when others are doing it for you.

Support Your Troops So They Support Your Way of Life.

When a length of jagged bone earns a purple heart pinned to a collapsed lung,  
you will pay the bill. Do it with honor. Your Not Dead just got easier.



## **9. Past Performance Does Not Guarantee Future Results**

You want to improve your lot. Most of us are not born ahead, and fewer still actually make it on our own. But you can gain an advantage over time through wise investments. You follow the trends—you know the risks. Sometimes these investments fail. This occurs from poor planning and insufficient communication. It isn't necessary to scrutinize your ventures, but you should keep track and are advised to watch for signs of faltering when dealing with less than satisfactory principle.

The prime culprit in investment failure is lack of discretion—especially when you assume the trust is mutual or experience an unforeseen maturity gap. The potential return may have blinded you into a hasty decision, and now—the shared interests trivial and the period of grace long elapsed—being Not Dead doesn't seem so wonderful. Even if the synergy with merging is at a premium, over time, endowments and overall performance will degrade—yours included. Make the best of it. If this isn't possible, cut your losses and trade out.

Another common trend with variable rates of success is the concentrated effort to produce yield. These supplementary investments may provide you with additional future securities. Keep in mind, however, initial upkeep is substantial and the outcomes may not be favorable. Even the brilliant and well intentioned produce mean results.



## 10. Stop Identity Theft Before You Happen

You've been to soirees and other public spaces where, upon meeting someone new, after Hello drops the inevitable So What Do You Do? You may cringe when you hear this question, but it doesn't stop you from asking it yourself. How you make money defines your personality and determines your social worth. You don't really care whether a stranger enjoys what he or she does—you just want to know if they can help you. If another's occupation or leisure time fixation intrigues you, Oh? How Did You Manage That? is an acceptable ruse for How Can I Become You?

Nowadays people have several careers and professional distractions throughout their lives, but you can only pursue and fail so many. Find what works for others and adopt their behaviors. Therefore, yes, every interaction is a selfish maneuver. But remember, it's an exchange—and don't be offended or discouraged when another's interest in you as a person is feigned.

Just as important as identity construction is identity preservation. Safeguard your social security number and use more than one password for your online and financial accounts. If you elect to keep savings, far worse than having your good name tarnished, your time squandered or your assets drained is knowing thieves will be having more fun with your identity than you do. They will get the biggest TV and the tiniest phones you've ever seen. They'll all have LASIK surgery then mountain bike the Andes, and buy the loft with the best view and optical wire everything. Instead of confronting someone being better at being you than you, become the thief yourself and indulge denied desires. Still keep your information safe—just don't keep much in the safe.



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B2  
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HUNDRED DOLLARS

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## 11. Debit to Society

No one can convince you that without exception the national deficit is good for the country. Even if you don't experience it directly, knowing collective debt plunges deeper into the red makes you uneasy. If you can manage your expenses, why can't the government? But maybe you can't balance your personal budget—and if you can, maybe you shouldn't. This doesn't present the economy a best-case scenario, but it does promise security. Maintaining debt keeps you from getting lazy; you also will be more likely to treat yourself with a vacation, a new couch or a fine wine when victories need rewarding. Wouldn't life be dull if luxuries were commonplace and the little things unnoticed?

Don't live so far beyond your means you bankrupt the possibility of continuing to climb up. One of the most productive debits is the higher education loan. Study the matrices of tuition expenses versus what your degree will mean coming from your institution of choice or default. If you're not nervous about finding gainful employment, you're not paying enough. Aim high—fly high.

If you have already completed college, keep this in mind for your children or, just as important, for yourself when the market requires you to return to school. Careers can be unsatisfying, necessitating change; they can also become irrelevant or disappear completely, and you will need to retrain to keep abreast with emerging technologies and overseas workforces. Jobs aren't created for people—people are created to do jobs. Design yourself to fit into a niche and stick with it as long as possible.

Just as hardy savings entice theft and threaten your identity, enormous debits indicate you take your life seriously—you hold the reins and control your destiny.

So build up debt like a tower to heaven.

With each expense, each loan, each debit—and thus each acquisition, professional degree and intention—you'll not only reach for the stars, you'll grab them.



## 12. The Path of Least Existence

You've made it this far—in the Guide to Modern Living and in life. You want to go further: dream bigger, soar higher, worry less and succeed more. But you also just want to get by. Be judicious but not judge. Act in your best interests. Raise a fist and run. Not dying has never been easy—but has it always been this hard? How will you know what is important: what is worth your effort, involvement and stress, and what is best left for someone else to fix?

Many believe that to desire something is to deserve it, and the more you want it, the more you should have it. If you don't attain a goal, it's not because you don't work hard—you simply don't want it enough. While this holds true for personal desires, it also infects what you think is unselfish. Perhaps you feel it's not the world that owes you something, but that you owe the world: you should bless it with more than your ecological footprint. You wish to promote sustainability and repair ravished lands—to conquer corruption and raise aloft the downtrodden, protecting who cannot protect themselves. But if results do not satisfy—and given the magnitude of problems, how could they possibly—the integrity of your intent will be under attack. You could never do enough, and what you do accomplish is complicated by your privilege that thinks it can determine what indicates progress.

It is devastating to realize you lack sufficient desire to achieve a personal objective or to effect meaningful change. You do deserve what you want. But sometimes you can't get it—and often, you shouldn't. Let the craving to aspire, accomplish and become be an end in itself. Desire desire, need want and regard actually getting as empty and dangerous. Worse than discovering you're a failure is slipping inside complacency. Nothing says not Not Dead than thinking yourself done. Only the middling way guarantees stability. The path of least existence is the safest mode of being, an infallible route past menacing extremes.

If still trapped in a cycle of deception and uncertainty because of it, wanting something but not enough to get it and maintaining the belief you deserve it, remember this:

Lack of fulfillment doesn't fragment experience.  
Experience fragments experience. And you want to be whole.



## **YOU ARE NOT DEAD!**

After internalizing the contents of this guide, becoming aware of better living through not dying, you may wish you had more time to prepare for your transformation. The truth is you've been Not Dead for a while now. As you continue your journey with your new ideas, you may slip into old habits or unhelpful thoughts. Don't curse these transgressions or blame yourself. The only shortcoming you could possibly commit is denying you too contribute to prosperity—you have a place in and duty to disaster. Affirm yourself through the security of the prosperous. Find comfort within crisis and how you choose to deal with it, turning trauma into triumph.

Do your part. Feel all right.

Witness your improvement and allow it to delight, exhilarate and calm.

Being Not Dead, as glorious as it is, will be over soon.

**PLEASE SHARE THIS PAMPHLET. IT MUST SERVE FIVE READERS.**



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