

Working to Live It Up (and Down)

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 18 August 2016 22:00

There are still some things in life worse than working for a living. That's not immediately clear, when the alarm clock has triggered its doomsday, crash-dive klaxon, just when, in your dream, you were headed toward a bulkhead in your pina-colada-submarine... while doing underwater calisthenics with bulked-up dolphins in swim caps.

Another of the things worse than working? Staying up too late, watching Olympic athletes, and getting too little sleep, finding in the morning that someone has swapped out your brain with moldy linguini and damp sawdust. This was probably when you dreamed about synchronized snowball fights, and got up in the night, groggy, and turned the A/C blizzard down from *arctic eternity*

o
moderately crunchy eyebrows.

Another worse thing? Being a pre-percolated, overly-perky morning person -- way, way before the coffee starts -- and having to remember to tamp down all that natural energy. (Or, remembering to try not to swat the other person, if *you* are the bleary-eyed sleepyhead in the house. Then, there's the remembering-to-do-it-later part, after you're fully awake, when your reflexes are sharper, and your odds of making contact really go up.

We all *work to live*, of course, instead of *living to work*.

... except for the driven people on salaries, say, who are working 80-hour weeks hoping to help their companies turn tight financial corners, so that they might yet keep their jobs, and not be left unemployed, after they die, so as to still be able to still afford medical insurance and the outlandish medical bills, owing to a host of treatments and therapies triggered by the 80-hour weeks themselves.

(These may be the only people who, on their deathbeds, might actually have regrets about not putting in more hours at the office. These may be the same people who buy Cosmic Jolt-Blast cola by the pallet, and have t-shirts which read, "I'll sleep when I'm dead.")

The work-to-live rule also does not apply to artists of any stripe, and to people who are in mad,

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desperate love with their jobs. For you *whackos*, realize that you are not well-liked -- but, you should also know that you are sorely envied, almost as much as are lottery winners -- by the rest of us suckers and *shlumps* on the hamster wheel of life.

As for you born-wealthy types, some good advice: Stay safely behind the walls and fortresses of your luxury villas, compounds, and clubs. The rest of us are working night and day on ways to smuggle diving-klaxxon alarm clocks into your bed chambers, set for 3:33 in the morning --which is only half the beastly dose you demon-hell-spawn truly deserve.

(Besides, 6:66 a.m. is, like, 7:06 a.m., in Regular Person Time, which is way too civilized a time for the purposes of hassling *your* dainty sleep, for a change. Some of us are also trying to figure out a way to tax you in *dog years* -- or in *dog money*, at least, where, say, every time

we

pay a buck in taxes,

you

pay seven.

Million

, that is. You should be caught up on your arrears, and your fair share, by March, 2119.)

* * *

I've always wondered about the mysterious intersection of math, philosophy, sociology, and the qualitative, psychological nature of human-measured value. For example, say you are on salary and are working 80 hours a week. Now, your free time -- each and every hour -- has never been worth more to you than it is now, in this example. You have none; it is pure gold to you.

And yet, because of the number of hours you are putting in -- hours you are giving away, basically -- you have never been paid *less* for each and every hour worked: This makes each hour both increased in value, and decreased in worth (and vice versa), simultaneously.

(TIP: When you hit a pay scale of *half* of the current minimum wage rate per hour worked, *befo*

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re taxes

, take my advice:

QUIT.

Then, learn to turn your 20-year-old car into a luxurious loft apartment, complete with workshop -- a great spot for tinkering on foghorn- and air-raid-siren-based alarm clocks!)

* * *

Yes, making a living takes all the life out of living, it has been said. But, there are still worse ways to go. For example, imagine being fined around 7 or 8 bucks for not posting a comment to your boss's social media post. It happened to 200 people at a travel company in Jinan, China. (Workers were also fined for not carrying bags with the company's logo.)

Of course, you could always work for Egyptian state television. They've recently ordered their female hosts to lose weight or else face the ax, and been given one month to do so. Sound outrageously chauvinistic? The director is a woman -- and is also a former host. (*And, here, I thought experience was the basis for empathy and change...*)

How about working as a spokesman / spokeswoman / spokesdroid? Care to tackle Trump's daily tonnage of outrages and justify it as anything less than lunatic ramblings from a murky mental undertow? Then again, you could work for the the U.S. swim team, and paddle around in the chilly waters of apology and humiliation, explaining American Exceptionalism. Or, you could be working for McDonald's, say...

... and end up defending ideas on multiple fronts. How about giving away a wrist-worn activity tracker with Happy Meals, only to discover some kids have developed rashes from them? *Child ren,*
you could be asked by reporters
, *could also become active by running quickly away from Happy Meals, and the entire McDonald's menu, too, couldn't they -- right now, and later on, as adults -- as a healthier, safer, long-term goal?*

So, you could be told by bosses, *get out in front of this one, and reassure people that, once we knew about a problem with this unintentionally-ironic measurement device, and the Un-Happy*

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Meal experience, we swooped right down on it like good corporate citizens, and replaced the toy in the box!

And, please: don't say anything about the Fanged Hyena Razorback Dinos, with New Action Tail and Clamp-o Jaws we tried as the first toy substitution, OK?

* * *

For me, I'll take Goofy's gig. He's a dog at an Indian ad agency. He was a stray. The agency had no dog. They adopted each other. Everyone's still very happy about everything -- workers, guests, clients. It's a nice story. Good to have happy endings. Takes some of the gnawing wilt out of things, this dog's life of work, work, work.

But, on the other hand, work allows you to live it up once in a while, so it can't be all bad. And, as we all know, we need to live it up now and again, or we'll have nothing to live down.

Meanwhile: Dogs are Zen masters; They live in the Now. There is no past, no future -- only Now. It is the way of all dogs. It is certainly Goofy's way.

Bark less, wag more, the bumper-stickers tell me. Good advice.

(I see those things all the time. □ Sometimes, I can even remember part of the plate... the make and model.... the color.... even the direction of travel, sometimes, as I bounce off the bumpers. Gutter dismounts are tricky maneuvers.)

Good luck with your time clock. Mine punches back.

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Today's Bonuses:

1) ☐ *A flashback song (ear-worm alert!) from that odd dream this morning...*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TazHNpt6OTo>

2) ☐ *Goofy's dream gig:*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-37092728>

3) ☐ *Just the thing for Island Deprivation Syndrome (aka Worker's Soul-Cramps):*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaQEaf92z00>

It's not the flashiest video out there, but it's among the best recipes around. ☐ ;)