Life²

Manifesto for life

10 things you can do when the world's gone wrong

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Manifesto for life

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the world's gone wrong**

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"We are the change we seek."
Barack Obama

We live in difficult times. Many people have been dismayed by the rise of right wing parties and right wing ideas in western democracies recently, with greed, xenophobia, sexism, and environmental damage just some of the unpleasant freight they carry with them. This is on top of a political system that was already strongly leaning to the centre right in the first place.

In times like these it is easy to fall into a sense of despair and disempowerment - to feel that you as an individual, despite the passion with which you care about these issues, can't do anything to wake the world up from its senses, or that the dice are so loaded in favour of the rich and powerful that there is little that ordinary people can do. Or even that you don't know where to start or how to prioritise your effort and actions in trying to turn the world around.

But this booklet aims to show that we *can* actually do something as individuals - something extremely powerful that not only improves the wider world and our own lives, but also acts as a clear statement of intent for the world we want to see. That thing is to live our own lives the way we think the world should be.

If we lead by example, the world might follow, but at the very least, we'll be living good lives ourselves.

To put it another way - it's the one thing you can do to take control in a world you can't ultimately control. So, this booklet also represents a way of helping people to take back control and feel a sense that their destiny is in their own hands.

Another reason to do something about our own behaviour is the fact that our day to day actions can be seen as the 'thin end of the wedge' for how our wider society behaves. It starts with each of us - for example, when we harbour lazy, prejudiced views, behave badly towards each other or are careless in how we set our own standards of thinking and behaviour, we allow ourselves to get ever closer in everyday life to the depths that create the conditions for dangerous political ideas and regimes to take root. It may be an over-cited example, but the rise of the Nazis in Germany in the 1930's provides a useful illustration of this, as we'll see at various points in this booklet.

It's also easy to just look around and criticise other people (including the public and those in power) for how badly they are behaving and how the world is failing to meet our standards - whether they be of morality, ethics, kindness or whatever. But before we rush to judgement, perhaps we should ask ourselves whether we are meeting these standards we set for the world - because if we're not meeting them ourselves, how can we expect (or indeed, demand) that the rest of the world

meets them?

Another reason for doing it is the fact that it is interesting to think through what our standards are, and this can help us assess whether we're each living our own lives as we feel we really should.

So, at Life Squared we've been through this process of reviewing the standards that we might set for ourselves if we want to lead the world into a hopeful future, and have set them out here as a 10 point manifesto that we can implement in our own lives right now.

Some of the points are relatively easy to put into action, and others less so, but each of them has some wonderful and exciting benefits beyond the value of actually doing them in the first place. For example, helping other people can make us feel great ourselves, connect us to others and open up exciting opportunities and relationships that might not otherwise have been there. It's win/win/win!

Each of the chapters contains some practical ideas for how you could incorporate a particular point into your life. There's also a 'Further reading' section at the end of each chapter to help you explore some of the ideas in more detail if you'd like to.

Take these actions and you will make the world better - in a meaningful, significant way for yourself and those around you, and at the same time, you will be setting the world on a better course with another positive example. You will also have lived a life to feel proud of.

Point 1

Be kind

Point 1 - Be kind

"*No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.*"
Aesop

The shift to the right in various countries around the world has left many people with a sense of deep unease, shame and disgust. This is not just because of the policies that this shift to the right entails, but also the language and thinking that has been used to describe certain people (e.g. Donald Trump's views on Mexicans), and the suspicion and resentment this provokes towards various groups in society.

The thing missing from many of the political ideas, media coverage and views being thrown around at the moment is the simple idea of *kindness*.

What is kindness?

Kindness is not some hippyish, abstract concept that isn't viable in the 'real world'. It could in fact be described as *the most important virtue that exists among human beings*.

One could argue that it is more virtuous than love, as kindness is unconditional; it demands and expects nothing in return - it is done for its own sake.

Kindness is an attitude - not just behaviour or one act in isolation. It should be a natural, unforced, instinctive reflex towards how we engage with the world around us - from people through to other creatures through to how we think. Underlying it all is a sense of love, trust and respect for people.

It is where you have the courage to ignore your own ego and interests, and reach out to people in some way. It's a sense of wanting to give to others for its own sake - because it makes other people feel good, or represents a model for good behaviour. Not simply because it makes you feel good, although this is a handy consequence of it.

An attitude of kindness could lead to a wide range of behaviours and decisions. For example, at a personal level it could include caring for someone who is old, through to simply meeting the eyes of people and smiling at them when you see them. At a political level it might include policies to support people who are sick or disabled, as well as helping people who have less than us - both overseas and in our own country.

Why does it matter?

It should be clear from the description above that living with an attitude of kindness has a range of positive effects on the world - making a wide range of other people's lives happier and better - from strangers you walk past on the street to those in other

countries who benefit from your attitude.

Although our goals are often motivated by kindness, I suggest it could also be a more useful attitude to seeking progressive social change than the one commonly held by many of us who do this, which is 'I want to change the world'. This is for various reasons, including:

- It takes personal responsibility immediately by actually acting in a kind way, not just thinking about it.

- It starts with something you can achieve immediately rather than setting abstract goals you may never achieve.

- It's not target-driven - this is a critical point - if you're being kind for its own sake then *you can't fail at it*. It also has the helpful consequence that you don't get caught up in trying to 'control' the world - your kind actions are being done for their own sake.

- People can seek 'change' for all sorts of reasons and have many different goals when seeking change - and these certainly don't have to be positive or good. By contrast, kindness has much clearer, benign effects.

- One can also quite easily fall into unkindness when one is too passionately carried away with the need for change, which can cause you to think and behave just as badly as those whose behaviour

and attitudes you're trying to change (look at the example of the language of the left and right at the moment, for example).

Another major benefit of kindness is that being kind to other people is actually good for us too, as it can improve our relationships, engagement with other people and our sense of our own identity. Perhaps there is an opportunity to develop a 'Kindfulness' movement that uses the practice of being kind in order to improve one's own mental health - although this rather goes against the idea of kindness as something that should be done for its own sake, not for another end. The benefits should be a side effect of kindness.

What's the problem?

Kindness is clearly important in human society. And in the past, the idea of kindness hasn't been the exclusive property of those either on the political left or right - compassionate people on both sides of the political divide have incorporated kindness in their attitudes and policy-making, albeit with different views of the political means one should adopt to achieve this end.

In fact, I suggest we should be deeply suspicious about any political, religious, economic or other doctrine that *does not* aim to show kindness - as it is likely to be ultimately inconsistent with human flourishing.

To follow this point, I would argue that some of the

key political, cultural and economic ideas in recent decades have been exactly this - largely inconsistent with human flourishing. This is because they have been driven by economic goals (maximisation of economic growth, for example) rather than human goals (such as maximisation of people's well-being).

For example, the whole idea of neoliberalism seems to militate against kindness - the idea that people should seek (and want) as much wealth as possible for themselves, with the (convenient) side effect that wealth will naturally 'trickle down' to others when people look after their own interests - so they don't have to look after each other!

Apart from the fact that the 'trickle down' side effect assumed to happen above doesn't actually happen in reality, it is clear that neoliberal economics and some of the other ideas and values of modern society associated with it (including advertising, consumerism and material ambition) are strongly weighted against the idea of kindness and being outward looking.

In fact, they can strongly influence us to take the opposite approach - that it is 'everyone to themselves', that acts of kindness are too soft and that people who think like this will be crushed in a world and economic system where competitive advantage is everything. Despite this atmosphere though, kindness is often still held up as a form of heroism, even by the most unlikely sources. See this article from the

Daily Mail online, for example - http://tinyurl.com/jxqbyl9,[1] highlighting the virtues of a man's kind behaviour.

This isn't the end of the story though. In the last couple of years, there has been a shift further towards the political far right in some western countries (such as the USA), which has exacerbated this problem of 'the kindness vacuum' to a much more significant degree. Not only are many of the policies of people such as Donald Trump clearly less kind towards vast numbers of people (including immigrants and people in need - both in their own country and abroad), but the language they use to describe their attitudes and policies has also become tainted with unkindness and replaced with suspicion, fear and hatred.

This language has started to infiltrate our society (through newspapers, other media and members of the public) and the parameters of what is acceptable to say seem to have shifted in a worrying way - as they so often do when bad regimes or ideas start to take root. See the Life Squared booklet 'How to be civilised' for further exploration of this.

The key point I want to draw at the end of this section is that kindness is notable by its absence in modern politics. And this is a worrying development - because if policies and language become inconsistent with kindness they can be - or lead to - evil.

Kindness should form the basis for all our decision-making

We therefore need to fight for a society in which kindness forms the basis of all our economic, political and social ideas and policies. We would see quite a different world if we did this, and decided to address human rather than economic goals. The precise nature of these policies and ideas is an issue for another publication - but see Richard Docwra's book 'Modern life - as good as it gets?' for further discussion of this.

Indeed, kindness is such a vital idea that it is the thing above all others that we need to build back into our politics, societies, cultures and individual lives. In fact, whether something is kind or not could be a very useful way of evaluating whether it is worth supporting - whether it is a political party, policy, action or personal viewpoint. It is a useful heuristic for evaluating whether you should pursue an action or thought further - you can ask yourself 'is that a kind way to think about it?' 'is that a kind thing for me to say/do?' etc. As an aside for parents, it is also a good way to encourage children to think about their behaviour and its consequences.

What can we do?

Clearly we need to build kindness into our individual lives more - and not just token acts of kindness but adopt a complete new worldview focussed on kindness

- a new way of seeing the world, thinking and behaving - all the time.

To achieve this, we need to practice it - as when we practice things they become habits, and kindness is a habit we can develop. Just as we can slip into an attitude of closing ourselves off from other people and the world and not reaching out to them, we can also develop the opposite attitude - of reaching out. And as we've seen this can have many advantages for us, aside from the benefits it brings to the wider world. In fact, you may see positive results so quickly when you start adopting this approach, you may get hooked on it, so that it becomes a virtuous habit!

Why not try it - just approaching your day and the world with a smile on your face and an attitude of reaching out to people and meeting their eyes and seeing what you can do to make the world better. You may find that it completely changes your feelings (almost instantly), as well as your view of the world and, after time, your life.

In summary - *make kindness the foundation of your whole outlook on life and behaviour.*

Further reading

The Power of Kindness: The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life by Piero Ferruci, Jeremy P. Tarcher, London 2007

Point 2

Exercise empathy

Point 2 - Exercise empathy

"*A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination.*"

Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays

Our capacity to empathise with the feelings and situations of others - and to see them as human beings rather than 'other' in some way - is absolutely fundamental to our ability (and willingness) to treat each other well and, ultimately, to be civilised.

We are capable of acts of extreme cruelty when we fail to see other people as human beings. Empathy breeds understanding, dialogue and respect. Its opposite breeds suspicion, fear and hatred.

The Nazis recognised this point, and the process they went through to 'dehumanise' their victims in the minds of other people (from making them look filthy and smelly to seeing them as 'vermin') was vital in their ability to get the public to accept the cruelties and injustices being inflicted in their name, as well as to reassure soldiers and other participants in the killings and other horrific acts that they should

actually carry them out.

It's also worth reminding ourselves that terrible events such as the Holocaust did not take place in a completely different world from our own, occupied by completely different creatures - they took place in houses like ours and in streets like ours, populated by people like us. There's a certain mundanity to violence and terror - they can become everyday actions if we let them become so.

So, our individual attitudes and behaviour can be seen as the 'thin end of the wedge' in society - either for good or ill.

We should be aware that similar dangerous attitudes are taking root again now in certain countries, and we must take action to stop this. One of the most upsetting aspects of far right wing factions in modern democracies is their blatant lack of empathy for people they would see as 'other' - including people of different religions, immigrants and even people of different countries. When politicians such as Nigel Farage use photographs of queues of Syrian refugees[2] as election posters to make political capital, this not only shows a dreadful lack of empathy and respect towards them, but stokes ignorance, fear and hatred.

What we do in our own lives really matters here, even if we can't instantly change the way the rest of the world behaves. Our individual attitudes, opinions and actions in daily life set the atmosphere and standard

for the level of empathy in society generally. If we talk about other groups of people in a lazy, negative way or we leave those that do to continue unchallenged in daily conversation, then we allow the conditions to emerge for prejudice and hatred to take root in broader society. But if we challenge these attitudes when we come across them in daily life (such as in conversations with friends and co-workers), and talk about others in an empathetic way ourselves, we can help to set the standards for the attitudes we expect in a civilised society.

So, our minor prejudices and little cruelties are the thin end of the wedge for much bigger horrors. For example, lashing out at people when we're tired, letting our tempers flare in a road rage incident or the negative thoughts and lazy prejudices that we keep in our heads most of the time that judge, and separate us from, other people. This is not necessarily because these thoughts or behaviours have substantial impacts themselves individually (our muttering under our breath that 'we should get rid of those immigrants' isn't likely to directly affect anyone), but because they foster an attitude in our own minds that this thinking and behaviour is acceptable, and the more we let ourselves get away with it, the more likely we are to let ourselves accept bigger things in the future, so that less and less 'civilised' views and behaviour seem less radical as our standards drop.

This not only the case for how we think and behave as

individuals, but also affects other people, as when we share these views and act out this behaviour it sets an example to others (not just children but adults too) - and gives a sense that these sentiments and actions are acceptable in society. They also create a less civilised, compassionate atmosphere - just consider the difference in atmosphere between a football terrace and a meditation retreat centre.

Looking at it with a more positive spin, empathy is also about looking beyond ourselves and adopting an open, welcoming view on other people in the world, where we are interested in the differences around us and keen to understand people for who they are. The alternative is being closed to them in your mind, which can often leave us with a sense of fear about people who are different, and this is often fertile ground for the growth of prejudice and hate - as we are seeing around the world at the moment.

So, here are a few things we can do to fully realise our sense of empathy:

- Respect all other people as humans and acknowledge they have exactly as much of a right to exist on this planet as you do. You won't need to exercise the questionable virtue of tolerance (essentially, putting up with other people's differences) if you do this, as you'll be truly seeing them as another person rather than grudgingly agreeing to coexist with them.

- Be open-minded and don't rush to judge people until you actually understand them.

- Make an effort to get to know people - even (especially) people we don't understand or don't connect with - as we might find this help us to see their point of view better and like them more.

- Realise that it is only as a matter of chance that you came to be living in this country, under this belief system, with these resources and opportunities - and that for all the differences that these random chance factors have created, you're still basically the same as other people. Strive to feel a sense of connection with people - rather than a sense of superiority or inferiority.

- Monitor your attitudes, statements and actions in daily life - to ensure you are acting in an empathetic way. We should all exercise the discipline and self-awareness to check and correct ourselves whenever we find ourselves thinking of, talking about or behaving towards people (whether groups or individuals) as 'other' or somehow not as human as the rest of us.

- The ability to feel and act upon empathy should also be promoted by the education system as a life skill for people. It should be cherished and protected, and people should be made aware of its importance, as well as what the world could be like (and has been like) in its absence.

- A final point regarding empathy is that we need to be constantly aware of how our actions affect other people - and empathy is an important skill enabling us to do this. It helps us to exercise the Golden Rule - an important heuristic for living a civilised life if ever there was one - as espoused by thinkers from Confucius to Jesus to Kant - 'treat others in the way you wish to be treated'.

In summary - *always seek to understand and empathise with people.*

Further reading

Empathy - why it matters and how to get it by Roman Krznaric, Rider, London 2005

How to be civilised - Richard Docwra, Life Squared 2016

Make a contribution

Point 3 - Make a contribution

*"Do your little bit of good where you are;
it's those little bits of good put together
that overwhelm the world."*
Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Those with certain political views would like you to believe that we are just individuals – the famous Margaret Thatcher speech that 'there is no such thing as society'[3] confirms this. Neoliberalism promotes individualism, and an eroding of the non-financial bonds that tie people together.

The fact is though, we are not just individuals. We may be born into the world as individuals, but from our first second of being in the world (when many of us are helped into it by a midwife) we are embraced into societies - groups of individuals that seek to make life better for all by co-operating and supporting each other.

No matter how much we may want to isolate ourselves as individuals and pursue our own selfish interests, most of us can't completely isolate ourselves and are bound to come across other people sooner rather than later, especially in an increasingly complex and interconnected world with a population of seven and a half billion people - and counting. In conclusion, *we have to live not just as individuals but*

as members of a society.

We therefore have to consider how we can roll along with other people best - at the very least in communicating with them and dealing with the competition for resources, food, water, shelter and other things that they represent. The obvious answer seems to be to try to coexist with people in a harmonious, civilised way, and in a spirit of trust and cooperation. For example, to think about the effect of our actions on others, to empathise, to share and to protect other people and put their interests above our own occasionally.

Plenty of events from the past (including the Holocaust) not only show us that we are intrinsically linked to each other's well being, but that a good, peaceful, civilised society needs to have (and continually foster) a sense of collectivism - a sense that we are 'in it together', and are each part of a bigger whole rather than as isolated individuals pursuing our own desires.

We should therefore not just look to our own interests as individuals, but ask ourselves how we can contribute to the lives of others and the society around us. This will include a wide range of specific areas that we will talk about below, but it also represents an overall attitude, consisting of the following principles, among others:

● I don't live in isolation - and my actions have an

effect on other people and the wider world.

- I am not the centre of the world, but part of it.

- There is therefore a balance to be struck between the pursuit of my individual interests and my contribution to wider society. This shouldn't however stop me pursuing my own interests (where they are reasonable), as well as nurturing and being proud of my own identity.

- The rest of the world doesn't owe me anything, and I should not have a sense of entitlement. The social and financial systems that support us are artificial structures, that are ultimately sustained by people having a sense of 'fair play' about them and making a contribution towards them. We should be happy and proud of making this contribution as part of building a good society.

Aside from this overall attitude, here are some specific ways we can each make a contribution towards the society we are part of:

- **Pay your share** - we should rethink our attitude towards paying tax. Over recent decades in the UK, dominated by a right-wing press and a broadly centre-right series of governments, people have been encouraged to view the taxman as a faceless bogeyman who essentially steals our money from us and wastes it on things that are of no benefit to us. This is of course a convenient image to project if you are seeking a smaller state and lower

taxes, but the question of tax should not be settled through political dogma, but instead by asking what we need to pay for to enable everyone to have good lives, and a country or society we're proud of. When we put the question like this (as it should be), we then see tax as an opportunity to build a better society together - where we all benefit from it and look after each other. It is therefore a contribution we should be proud to pay in order to have a better world for us all. And it is about all of us - it's been shown that less equal societies are not only morally unjust, but are also worse for the well-being of not just the poor but the rich too[5].

- **Help people** - we should live with our heads held up, alert to other people who might need help around us and being willing to be of service to them when they do. This doesn't mean you have to devote your entire life to serving other people or behave like Mother Teresa, but is simply about having the attitude that you are willing to give your time to helping other people when they need it.

  Many of us probably do this quite often (for example, helping out neighbours) and like to feel we do it all the time whenever it's needed but I know if I look at myself honestly that I probably only do it when it suits me and on my own terms. It can be easy to put our heads down and walk past when we see someone in need, thinking it will take too much of our time when we're busy or it

might be awkward in some way. Or we might be judgemental and feel they don't deserve our help, or feel that our help wouldn't make any difference anyway. But in most cases, these are just excuses, and we probably could have helped, if we are being honest with ourselves.

What if we prioritised helping others above some of the other basic things in our lives? This has got to be realistic of course - and I'm not talking about consistently neglecting one's other commitments (like family) to do it, but just being prepared to juggle your arrangements or change your comfortable daily schedule if it's needed to help someone.

It may mean going out of our comfort zones from time to time, but it could make a massive difference to the society we live in, and the atmosphere that pervades it. Imagine if we all felt that we were all really looking out for each other? Aside from this benefit to society, there are a range of substantial personal benefits to adopting this approach - from connecting you with new people, through to giving you a wonderful sense of fulfilment and happiness for having helped someone. In many ways, it may also be easier to just help than to have to deal with the unpleasant feelings of guilt when we've not helped when we could have done.

And even if your motivations for wanting to adopt this 'of service' attitude are a mix of selfless and

selfish, that's still fine. In the words of the fabulous Amy Poehler:

> *"There are so many people in the world with so little. Who cares why you decide to help?"*

Try this attitude of 'being of service' for a week, and it could change your life - as well as, of course, make the world better for other people!

- **Just take enough** - this is a simple point, and one that may seem like anathema in an age of neoliberal economics, where 'greed is good' and the acquisition of as much as possible for ourselves is the aim. We live in a world of seven and a half billion people, sharing a finite set of resources. We also live in a world in which there is an immense inequality in income and resources between people. A small percentage of people have vastly more than they need (and have the capacity to cause social, political and environmental damage with the power this brings) whilst a large percentage of people do not have what they need.

We are also over-using the carrying capacity and resources of the planet we live on - which also happens to be the only one that can support us, as far as we know, and certainly in the foreseeable future. This philosophy of individually only taking what we need supports not only a better society but also a sustainable future.

The solution to this may include regulation

and policies to reduce our consumption and re-distribute some of the wealth in the world and within societies, but this could take some time to achieve (if it could be achieved to a satisfactory level at all). One thing we can each do immediately however is live with the philosophy that '*I will only take enough*' - enough to have a reasonable life, but enough to enable others to live reasonable lives too.

Enough income, enough wealth, enough material resources. Not acquiring more things than we actually need - whether it is homes, cars, food or plastic trinkets. And this goes way beyond material resources. Many people are utterly powerless and unrepresented in this world, and redistributing material resources can help redistribute many other vital non-material goods, such as opportunities in life and access to respect and representation.

This of course links with the other points in this 'Contribute' chapter - those of 'Paying your share' and 'Being of service' - because if you have some spare resources, consider passing some of the excess on to other people who don't have enough. As with all the ideas in this publication, if we can't get our governments to do this for us yet, why can't we do it ourselves, immediately?

There are many other examples we could cite as ways of contributing to society, but these are just a few to illustrate the point. Overall, it's about an attitude -

the desire to be open to other people and contribute to society, in the knowledge that we are not just individuals, but all part of that society.

In summary - *live and contribute as a member of society, not just an individual.*

Further reading

The Spirit Level - why more equal societies almost always do better by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, Allen Lane, London 2009

The Joy of Tax - Richard Murphy, Corgi, London 2016

http://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living/do-things-for-others/details

Point 4

Take responsibility

Point 4 - Take responsibility

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."
Anne Frank

The idea of taking responsibility for one's actions and words might seem to be an old-fashioned idea, lost to a bygone age. In a world where people can spew endless invective on social media platforms without considering its consequences, and where we can trash the planet with our excessive air travel and obsessive levels of consumption, we seem to have forgotten the fact that our behaviour has an effect on the world around us, including on other people.

It is even more of an alien idea that we should actually take responsibility for these impacts - but of course we should, especially if we are seeking the vision of a good society that this publication is discussing.

The general principle that we should take responsibility for ourselves extends to a wide range of areas of our lives. Like the other points explored in this publication so far, it can best be seen as a general attitude to life and your relationship with the world beyond you, which can then apply to every area of your life.

This attitude is to acknowledge that everything we say or do potentially has an impact - on other people, other creatures or the world around us, and that we are responsible for this impact. *We shouldn't just say or do something and then walk away from it or disown it* - we should take responsibility for everything we say or do.

It follows as the final point of this attitude that, if we take responsibility for our own actions, we should also take responsibility for choosing the actions that have the most positive and least negative impact.

As already noted, this is not an attitude that is particularly popular today. But if we had this expectation of ourselves and others it could have huge, positive consequences. For example, imagine if we took responsibility for everything we said - perhaps we would be more careful how we described people when gossiping with friends or when letting off steam on social media. Perhaps we would be less lazy, judgemental and prejudiced with our language. This is just one small example of the huge potential impact of adopting this principle.

Here are some specific examples of what it means to take responsibility for yourself:

- **Treat other people as you'd like to be treated** - we should apply the principles of kindness and empathy to the way we treat other people in our daily lives. As already mentioned, this

principle has been adopted by many religions and thinkers over the ages (from Jesus to Kant) as the Golden Rule - treat others in the way you'd like to be treated yourself. If we find that we have accidentally had a negative effect on someone we should do what we can to rectify it – from apologising in a genuine way, through to sorting it out. This process demands some humility from us – something that can be a rare commodity in the present world as people are often told that to apologise or back down is to show 'weakness'. It is not.

- **Don't manipulate people** – we should actively avoid trying to mislead or manipulate people, as both are generally selfish, anti-social tactics, and show a lack of respect for others. If we find that we have inadvertently done this, we should again show some humility and seek to rectify it.

- **Don't exploit others** - in your quest to achieve your own goals, don't exploit other people. This idea leads to some quite profound consequences - for example in how we earn money. If we run a business this suggests that we should pay all our workers a fair wage and give them good working conditions, or if we are a landlord we should offer reasonable rents and good conditions for our tenants. If we invest money, we should only do it in things that don't condone or encourage the exploitation of people.

- **Protect the environment** – the need to take responsibility for our behaviour doesn't just apply to our impact on other people but on the rest of the world too - from animals to the planet. We should each aim to use no more than our share of the planet's resources as an individual. For most of us, this will involve a substantial change in behaviour, because we're currently living way beyond our planet's means. If everyone in the world was to have the same lifestyles as people in the UK, we would need more than 3 planet earths (5 if we were to live like people in the USA). We should also aim to treat animals with the same sense of kindness and empathy we apply to the rest of the world.

- **Our principles** - we each need to take responsibility for what we believe in. We not only need to be taking responsibility for our own actions but also for those of other people and the direction of the world around us. This continues the principle mentioned in chapter 2 that 'no man is an island' - we all have a responsibility for the world around us and the other people in it, as well as for ourselves and our own conduct. So, we should also consider the impact of us not taking action at a particular point. If people are not behaving in a way we feel is right or the world is going in a direction we don't like, we should do something about it - and this applies to small issues like someone dropping litter through to larger issues such as ensuring

one votes and is politically active. This is such an important point in the current political situation we find ourselves in that we've added it as a point in its own right - see chapter 7 - 'Stand up for your principles'.

These are just a selection of examples, and although each requires some effort, they could be relatively straightforward to achieve within our day to day lives. It can however be a challenge to take responsibility for our impact on the people and environment beyond our immediate vicinity, as the modern world is complex and many of our impacts are hidden behind a complex chain of people and events, so we may not be aware of the effects we have – whether good or bad. To be able to take responsibility for our actions (and live in an ethically consistent way) in the modern world, we therefore have to start educating ourselves about the world around us and in particular the processes and systems that surround our daily actions.

As you can see, many of the points above are about stepping down from our constant need to assert our power over other people – either through putting them down, lying to them or exploiting them in some way. This is the opposite of how we are taught to behave if we want to succeed in the super-competitive global economy, and it takes some courage to do, as it makes us more vulnerable to some extent. This stance is critical however, as it shows others that we are open and trusting, and invites them to behave in the

same way. It's what we need to do if we want to be the change we want to see in the world.

In summary - *take responsibility for everything you say and do.*

Further reading

How bad are bananas? The carbon footprint of everything by Mike Berners-Lee, Green Profile, London 2010

What can I do? 10 ways you can really make a difference on climate change, Life Squared 2010

Point 5

Think for yourself

Point 5 - Think for yourself

"The third-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the majority. The second-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the minority. The first-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking."
A.A. Milne

We live in a world where we have to deal with more external influences, biases and pressures than ever before. These influences and biases are everywhere in our daily lives, and come from a wide range of sources, including television, newspapers, the education system, politicians, our workplaces and our family and friends.

For example, news outlets and the media we watch, read or listen to give us a view of the world with a certain political bias, depending on the political leanings of them or their ownership. There are also manifold cultural influences on us, including the pressure to look a certain way (thin and beautiful), to achieve a particular type of success (career and material), to be a certain type of person (assertive and always happy) and to live a certain type of lifestyle (a consumerist one in which we constantly seek to acquire more stuff).

In addition to these influences, we live in a world that is more complex than ever before, in a number of ways. There's more information, more sources of information, more possibilities to choose from in life, and the systems around us are more complex than ever before. How do we work out who's telling the truth or what's accurate?

As if to make things even more difficult, we live in age in which the idea of 'fake news' has emerged - where certain politicians and media seek to create stories they know to be false but that fill up the media space and attempt to influence people's views. This unwelcome new development muddies the water even further.

In this situation it's important for us to equip ourselves with the tools to be able to see through the fog of communications in the modern world, understand the biases and influences we may be subject to, and try to see things clearly. In other words, to truly think for ourselves, rather than be manipulated by others. To see the world as it really is, and not fall for the bullshit (of which there is a lot).

Below are a number of things we can do to ensure that we think for ourselves.

Learn to think critically

Critical thinking is the art of questioning the messages that we receive from any external source, whether it is friends, newspapers, television, the

internet or anything else. This doesn't just mean specific messages such as advertisements or conversations but also broader cultural, political or social orthodoxies such as the importance of striving for greater material wealth.

It is both a skill and an attitude towards the world. An attitude not of suspicion but of curiosity and scepticism - a desire to challenge whatever you are told until you can reassure yourself that it is genuine. A commitment to not being intellectually lazy and just accepting what you're told.

With the vast range of communications flying around in the modern world, it is important that we each get into the habit of questioning all the external messages we receive, so that we can evaluate whether the sources are reliable, what the purpose of the message is, how we should interpret it and whether it is something to be digested or ignored.

For example, it is useful to be aware of how consumerism touches your life and when people or organisations are trying to manipulate you with commercial messages. You may also be reading newspapers or watching television stations that have a particular political bias, and it is good to be aware of this when interpreting their messages.

When you receive any message, whether it is in a social conversation, at work, in a newspaper, or on television, think about whether you want to accept

it or not. You may decide to ignore a particular message because you don't feel the topic is important or because you feel its view of a topic is too biased. Consider the source it came from and whether it might have a particular agenda.

If you feel a particular message (or source) is too biased, you may want to get a more balanced view of the topic by exploring messages from a few different sources with different perspectives (for example, looking at the same story in other newspapers) or by finding a source you can trust before you make a judgement.

Get informed

Search out insights and information to help you understand how the world works. Not just the broad level knowledge set out in chapter 8 ('Seek perspective'), but also how the institutions, processes and systems that govern us work. It is critical to have an understanding of how policies are formed, politicians are influenced, voters are targeted, news agendas are set and many other issues relating to the operation of our political system. This can help us influence the system better, as well as understand how it filters our own particular perception of the world.

For example, it's revealing to learn that some newspaper stories are placed by PR firms, often seeking to influence the news agenda for political

advantage or commercial gain[4]. 'The news' as we know it isn't simply the most important news stories in the world being communicated to us in an objective way. We each see a filtered version of the political and social reality, and it helps us a great deal to be able to understand just how our own realities are biased and how this came about.

Seek facts - not just reassurance

Facts matter - as without them we would be living with a delusional view of the world and be vulnerable to exploitation by other people. Take climate change for example. If people had facts there'd be no doubt among the public that it is happening - as it is a scientific fact. But there are wealthy and powerful groups pedalling propaganda that is aiming to convince people that climate change is a myth, and despite their lack of evidence, this campaign of misinformation is proving effective. Also there are lots of people who don't know the facts.

Sometimes though, facts can be difficult to track down, or can present us with realities that are either inconvenient for us in some way - perhaps to our wealth or require some effort - or require us to change our views of a particular issue.

We should each therefore transform ourselves into sleuths for facts - questioning the veracity of what we hear and not settling for a particular view of an issue until we've truly satisfied ourselves that it stacks

up - even if this is inconvenient for us or forces us to change our views.

Not only does this enable us to see things reasonably clearly, but it also equips us with a useful sense of humility and enables us to maintain high standards - something that is important when powerful people may be wanting these standards to slip, for their own benefit, power and influence.

So equip yourself with the facts as best you can, on important issues for yourself and the world.

Find some trusted sources of information

No source of information is completely unbiased, but it is possible to build a selection of trusted sources that can summarise and filter some of the complexity in the world for you. By finding these sources and understanding their biases, you can build a useful resource to help you deal with the complexity of the world on an ongoing basis. These may include newspapers, websites and other information resources.

Trust your values and identity

Developing a strong sense of who you are and what matters to you will give you a reasonable 'filter' for the complexity in the modern world, enabling you to identify which messages and areas of information are relevant to you, without feeling overwhelmed. This is linked to the next chapter - 'Identify your values'.

In summary - *equip yourself with the tools to see things clearly.*

Further reading

Flat Earth News by Nick Davies, Vintage, London 2009

The Hidden Persuaders by Vance Packard, Ig Publishing, London 2007

The Mind Diet by Richard Docwra, Life Squared, 2009

No Logo by Naomi Klein, Flamingo, London 2000

Point 6

Identify your values

Point 6 – Identify your values

"The really important thing is not to live, but to live well. And to live well meant, along with more enjoyable things in life, to live according to your principles."
Socrates

It's almost become cool to not care about anything or have any real values.

From the values-less (and value-less) world of consumerism and neoliberalism through to the youthful badge of 'slacker' - it's easier not to care and it's *sooo* tedious when anyone stops the fun by having values or, worse still, actually standing up for them.

Having values though should never be something to leave to the vagaries of fashion. It's too important for that. It's what gives some of us purpose. It gives us a path to follow in our lives - an unclear, overgrown path at times that we have to hack through and negotiate in order to continue, but a path nevertheless. It gives us a quick rule of thumb - a way to follow what we really believe.

If we have the luxury to look back at the end of our lives, a significant factor in whether we judge our lives to have been fulfilling or not may be whether we feel we were able to identify our real values,

and secondly whether we lived in a way that was consistent with them. We'll deal with the latter point in the next chapter, but it's worth saying that in the modern world it's a lot harder than it looks to identify what your values are, as there are many powerful influences trying to persuade you that their values are best, which can cloud your own vision of what really matters.

Take consumerism for instance. We live in a society where most of the communications we're exposed to are encouraging us to acquire more stuff, and an increasing number of them are going as far as to say that we need more of this stuff in order to be happy and find fulfilment in our lives. This latter point is an outright lie (proven by academic studies - see the Life Squared publication 'The problem with consumerism' for more on this).

We are not only surrounded by communications supporting this view, but these are bolstered up by the political and social culture we live in, where acquiring more material wealth is seen as one of the most important goals in life, and that people who do so are to be admired. When faced with this diverse array of powerful influences that reinforce this particular worldview, it's no wonder that many people find themselves trapped within this bubble of delusion about what matters and what they should do with their lives, as even though their unhappiness, exhaustion and instinctive ethical discomfort are

giving them plenty of clues, they are unable to see what really matters because it is so obscured by the fog of these influences. This is just one example of why it can be harder than it looks to identify what our values are.

The solution is firstly to clear away this fog by learning how to think for ourselves (see chapter 5). We should then take some time to stand back from the world and think about what our values actually are. Many people never go through this process. Perhaps it seems unnecessary, as we often feel we instinctively know what is right and wrong. But taking an hour or two to step back and think about your values can be a very useful exercise to make you reflect about what really matters to you - and whether you are living in a way that is consistent with this.

Some of these will be values you aspire to, even if you don't feel you consistently match up to them yet in your life - for example, being open to helping anyone you see in need (as explored in chapter 3). This process of identifying our values won't be entirely driven by rational thought – some values (and an honest appraisal idea of them) will only reveal themselves to you when you're in a situation of pressure and you react instinctively. For example – when you find yourself upset by the plight of refugees on a news report. You need to be careful though to check that what you're feeling there isn't driven out of fear, anger or other emotions that are less helpful in enabling us

to rise to the values we aspire to.

This process doesn't have to be a big intellectual struggle. It can be a mixture of values you aspire to have and things you're instinctively feeling that make you what you are. But don't be put off if your instinctive values feel like the opposite of many of the accepted ideas of what is good and admirable today, as some of these accepted ideas (from neoliberalism onwards) may actually be inconsistent with human flourishing. The point is to identify what really matters to you and to not be ashamed of it.

We should provide a caveat here that while it's important to be strong about your values (a point we'll explore further in the next section), it's also important to be open to reason and reflection too. We should be prepared to review and adjust our principles in the light of better evidence or arguments. This doesn't mean you are betraying your beliefs - it means they are evolving and becoming more refined.

An inability to review one's values or admit one is wrong can lead to a type of dogmatic moral stubbornness, which can be dangerous, as the individual (or political party, religion etc.) possessing it may try to convince others to hang on to this view for reasons other than its veracity. It is of course important though to be honest with yourself about why you are considering adjusting a particular value at a particular point in time. If it is out of genuine reflection, that is fine, but if it is due to fear, anger,

laziness or other reasons that make it inconvenient or uncomfortable to hold this value, then this is not a legitimate reason for changing it – and this is the point at which you need to stay strong with your values.

In summary - *take time to understand what really matters to you.*

Further reading

How Are We to Live?: Ethics in an Age of Self-Interest by Peter Singer, Prometheus Books, London 1995

How to live ethically by Richard Docwra, Life Squared 2009

Point 7

...and stand up for them

Point 7 -
...and stand up for them

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
Martin Luther King Jr.

Possessing a set of values isn't of any use unless you act in line with them and stand up for them. If you don't act on them, you might as well not have them at all.

And the thing about values is that the times where they are most important are when they are most under pressure and you feel it most difficult to hold on to them. So, courage is a key ingredient in our ability to stand up for our values.

Once we've defined our values we should try to live in a way that is consistent with them. This is partly about living our lives in line with some of the attitudes and behaviours we've already discussed in this publication (including kindness and empathy), even if sometimes this isn't the easiest path open to us.

It also means standing up for these values when they are challenged. This applies at the smallest, most personal level, through to the most extreme level when our lives are in danger. Let us look at the most extreme level first.

Within the Holocaust (and doubtless in other atrocities too) there are countless examples of where people allowed bad things - things they disagreed with - to happen without challenging them. These ranged from the rise of dubious political ideas through to terrible things happening in front of them in broad daylight. This lack of reaction might have been for a whole host of reasons, including (a justified) fear of punishment, a desire not to 'rock the boat' or simple laziness. This happened among the populations of Germany and various other European countries, as well as politicians, soldiers and other individuals.

The point here is that we all have the choice on whether to take action and speak up or not - at any point in our lives. Taking no action - and not speaking up – is a choice, and is an action. Being passive is an action. It only takes people to adopt a particular attitude (they don't need to take any action - merely to accept or condone the actions of others) to enable more energetic people with an agenda to perform unspeakable acts of cruelty and horror in their name. It only really needs one person with an agenda and a compliant public to enable terrible things to happen - things that previously seemed impossible.

As we are currently seeing with the rise of the far-right in the west, an idea, policy or sentiment doesn't need to be good or logical for it to spread in a society. It can be planted by force, through propaganda or arise via other means. And once it starts to gain

traction in a population, its growth can be very hard to stop, as it can be reinforced by many factors entirely unrelated to the veracity of the idea itself, such as people jumping on the bandwagon for reasons of fear or self interest. When it gets to this point, it is only people with the awareness of their convictions, and the courage and sense of broader social duty needed to express and stand by them, who provide hope.

In the recent protests about Donald Trump's ban on people from certain Muslim countries entering the US, one of the most powerful rallying cries to people to participate was this, from the writer David Slack:

David Slack ✓
@slack2thefuture

👤 Follow

Remember sitting in history, thinking "If I was alive then, I would've…"

You're alive now. Whatever you're doing is what you would've done.

RETWEETS LIKES
100,577 152,420

8:25 PM - 27 Jan 2017

↩ 775   ⇄ 101K   ♥ 152K

This entreaty to action uses our learning from situations in the past (such as the rise of Nazi Germany) to prompt people to get up and do

something to stand up for their values. The message works because it's an extreme situation in the present that can be compared with perhaps the most shocking and familiar human episode in recent centuries. Yet it is a message that applies to us throughout our lives, not just in extremis, as it challenges us to act with courage, in line with our values, all the time.

And make no mistake - it does take courage to do this - to go against our instinct for social acceptance (which is not always the same as 'pro-civilised' behaviour, by the way) and stand up for ourselves – especially when it feels like we're 'going against the grain'. This is the case even in everyday social situations, let alone exceptional circumstances when your life is under threat.

Yet we must do this - challenge and question things that instinctively don't seem right, fair or just to us, and speak up when our instinct or conscience tells us to - even if this just in relation to a minor incident in daily life (like asking someone to pick up a piece of litter they've dropped in the street) - as this 'practice' could give us the strength we need to stand up in the future when it really counts, if we are called upon to do so.

Perhaps we therefore need to place the idea of 'speaking out and standing up for your values' on more of a pedestal culturally - something that actually trumps social acceptance as a desirable and heroic act.

Life is short so we can put the effort into living in line with our values while we're alive, as we'll have plenty of time for rest later! And if we don't put this effort in, we will have failed to live up to the values and standards we expect of ourselves - which could be a key source of regret for us later in life.

This is of course aside from the most important external reason why we should follow this principle - that it is vital in helping the world and other people in it.

And if all else fails, to quote Susan Sontag:

> "*The likelihood that your acts of resistance cannot stop the injustice does not exempt you from acting in what you sincerely and reflectively hold to be the best interests of your community.*"[6]

In summary – *stand up for your values if you want them to survive.*
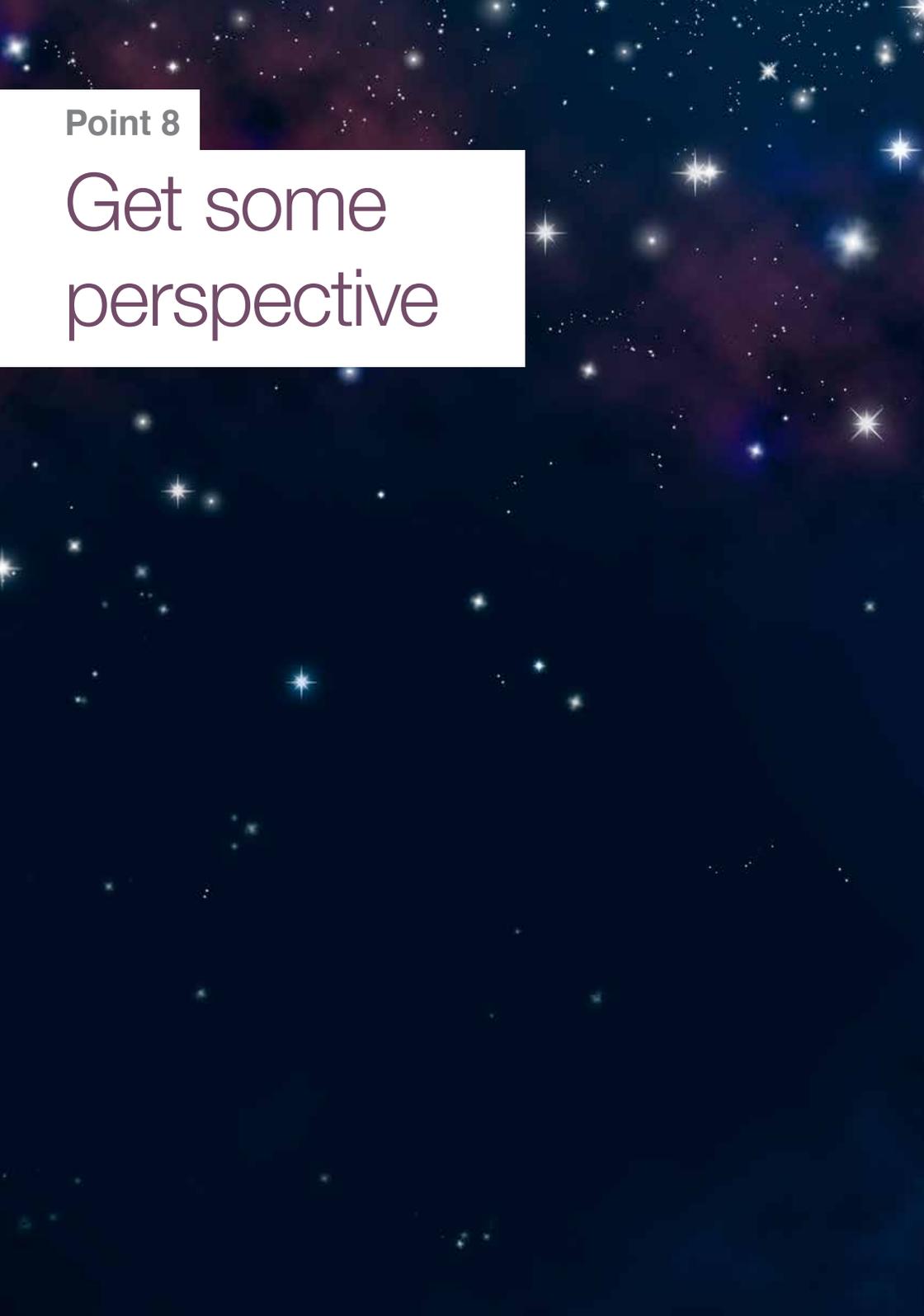
Further reading

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai, W&N, London 2014

How to be civilised by Richard Docwra, Life Squared, 2016

Point 8

Get some
perspective

Point 8 - Get some perspective

"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day."
Albert Einstein

Within the rush of everyday life, it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture surrounding your own existence – including the fact that you are materially better off than the vast majority of other people, living or dead, you are simply another member of the animal kingdom and you are just one of 7.5 billion human beings living on a tiny planet in a vast universe.

It is useful to be able to see the big picture on a wide range of topics, a few of which we will outline below. Understanding issues such as how we got to this point in history, how people work and how our ideas work can all help us to adopt a broader, wiser, more considered approach to life.

So, take some time to stand back from your life and

take yourself on a learning journey to explore the big picture, including:

- **The universe** – understanding the sheer scale of the universe, from the massive to the minute, can help us keep a grip on reality, put a more realistic spin on our problems and worries, make us feel part of a bigger picture (whether it is human beings, the natural world or the universe generally) and give us a more modest sense of our own self-importance, both individually and as a society.

- **Our planet** – building an overview of the rich diversity of the planet's terrain, animals, plant life and makeup can instil not only a deep motivation to protect these things, but also a better-informed idea of how to do this.

- **Human life** – gaining a picture of your place in relation to the other 7.5 billion people on the planet will help you to appreciate the massive differences in wealth, lifestyles, education and life opportunities across this population, and how lucky you are in relation to the vast majority of them. It may also provide a further sense of motivation to use your influence and resources (which are also vastly larger than the majority of the population) to seek a better world for everyone. It will also lead to a better understanding of the varied cultures and beliefs around the world, and therefore promote greater empathy.

- **History, politics** – this will give you a sense of the cycle of history, including how particular situations have cropped up in the past and the what led to them, as well as how our institutions and political processes have evolved. This perspective could give you context for current events, as well as understanding potential risks and how best to move forward.

- **Psychology, sociology, biology etc.** – understanding how human beings (and other animals) think and behave can give us a useful insight into what a good society looks like, what we can realistically expect from a society – both the good and the bad (including the fact that the layer of civilization on which we skate is a lot thinner than we think) and what the most effective ways are to achieve a better society and relationships among people.

- **Philosophy** – gaining an insight into philosophy could give you perspective on the history of ideas, not only understanding the key ones that have defined people's lives and societies throughout history (in areas from religion to politics), but also how they have evolved and fallen in and out of favour. It will also help you question some of the ideas overarching our lives today (from neoliberal economics to the idea of moral progress), and give you a better appreciation of the alternatives.

These are just a few of the most important areas you could choose to explore.

Ultimately, embarking on a learning journey and developing a sense of broad perspective like this will be one of the most personally rewarding things you could ever do. More relevantly to this discussion, it will also give you a wiser, more considered view on most matters – particularly relating to politics and how to make society better, and will hopefully enable you to identify when to participate and how to participate most effectively.

It may also bring a sense of greater empathy and understanding about other people, animals and living things around the world as we see ourselves as more connected to them than we realised, by looking at the bigger picture. More people understanding these things seems likely to bring a greater sense of harmony, less ignorance, and more willingness to look after the planet, as well as many other benefits.

From a personal point of view, having a clear sense of context on our lives and situations can help us to appreciate life more, and realise what a remarkable opportunity it is to be alive and be a creature with the capacity to actually reflect on, and appreciate, the experience of existing. This could also yield a sense of gratitude for one's own life and a desire to get the most out of it.

Gaining perspective is also a useful approach when

one is in potentially stressful situation too – just step back from the situation for a few moments and put it into perspective in the great scheme of things, and it may well seem more manageable and less stressful.

In summary - *stand back from your life and put things in perspective.*

Further reading

What on earth happened…in brief by Christopher Lloyd, Bloomsbury 2009

History of Western Philosophy by Bertrand Russell, George Allen & Unwin 1946

How to think about death (and life) by Richard Docwra, Life Squared 2015

The Life Canon – 10 essential books for modern life, Life Squared

Point 9

Seek peace

Point 9 - Seek peace

"It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."

Eleanor Roosevelt

This point covers two broad principles. The first is to seek harmony with other people where possible. Offer a smile rather than a fist. The second is to further develop the habit of pausing and using your cerebral cortex (i.e. your self awareness/rationality) instead of jumping into your instinctive 'fight' mode.

We are of course animals and have certain instincts (such as flight or flight) that can make it hard for us to stand back from things sometimes, but we also have other instincts (such as socialisation) that can make us seek harmony and above all this we have a cerebral cortex that gives us the ability to reason and think. It's not always easy (or desirable or even possible) to overcome some of our instincts, and perhaps people shouldn't even be blamed sometimes for getting angry, annoyed or violent, as it's simply responding to natural instincts. Yet it can clearly be useful for social harmony and a better world if we can give some control to them sometimes.

This is another case of it being an attitude to adopt to one's life rather than a specific set of actions. Like

some of the other points of this manifesto for life, it sits in direct opposition to many of the dogmas that overarch modern society. In this case, the idea of seeking peace stands against the whole idea of competitiveness and aggression that neoliberal economics encourages us to undertake.

This is also another principle that can't simply be dismissed as 'a load of hippy nonsense'. It is in fact an important and difficult skill. This is one thing we can do at a micro level that makes a massive difference. And it's often when things get pressured that this is most difficult to do yet most valuable. Whether it is in your personal life or on a big political stage, the idea of pausing to think what one is doing is key and can help everyone step back from the brink.

Like many of the points in this manifesto for life, seeking peace seems to be simple on the face of it – something that is passive and involves little effort. Yet, like the other points it actually requires greater bravery, commitment and effort than its opposite – in this case, aggression.

One famous example of this is the Cuban missile crisis in which the word stood on the brink of nuclear war whilst president Kennedy considered the range of options he could choose to deal with Kruschev's deployment of nuclear warheads on Cuba. Had a more hot-headed individual been in Kennedy's position, the consequences could have been disastrous for the

entire planet. Yet Kennedy adopted a calm, measured approach that ultimately paid off.

Another point to emphasise - throughout this manifesto for life, we've made numerous points arguing that we should be kind, empathetic and peaceful, but this does not mean we should be timid, roll over and fail to stand up for ourselves. Quite the opposite – we are arguing we should be strong, courageous and stand up for ourselves and our beliefs (see chapter 7 as an example), but that we can often hold back some our natural animal impulses and use our cerebral cortex a little more.

We can employ this strategy in our daily lives in a range of ways – for example, pausing before you decide to shout back at someone who has insulted you, and considering whether there is a better way to handle it. Again the idea is not to be a pushover but to be open to the possibility of peace and willing to be the one taking the risk to do it – but not such a level of risk as to have completely undermined our own position.

So, just to repeat, in pursuing the utopian ideal of peace, one of the things we should employ is a peaceful, considered approach to our relationships with others and any situations of potential conflict we may find ourselves in. This, rather conveniently, takes us full circle back to the first point of being kind, and the second point of exercising empathy.

In summary - *pause and seek peace when you can.*

Further reading

Super Cooperators: Evolution, Altruism and Human Behaviour or, Why We Need Each Other to Succeed by Martin Nowack, Canongate Books, London 2011

The Evolution of Cooperation by Robert Axelrod, Penguin, London 1990

Stay hopeful

Point 10 - Stay hopeful

"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death."

Nelson Mandela

Our final point is a shorter chapter than the others but is no less important. It is an appeal to stay positive, strong and hopeful of a better world as you go through your lifetime.

It can seem like an impossible battle when the political climate of the world is lurching further away from the values you believe in and the vision of a society you want to see. When the powerful seem more influential yet more out of touch than ever and other people aren't becoming as politically active as they need to be, it can make you feel powerless.

Yet, as we have argued throughout this publication, we are not. We can live the principled, courageous and kind lives that we want to see reflected in the world around us, regardless of whether that world

ultimately arises in our lifetimes or not.

It can feel like a slog to live at a time where society's values don't reflect your own, but a broad perspective on history shows us that political, social and cultural situations change over time - sometimes for the good, sometimes not. But these are just phases - and any period of history you are living through at a given time is just this - a phase, that will change over time. So, have hope.

We also need to keep strong and persevere in living good lives, for their own sake. But also remind yourself that, by doing this, you are having a positive effect on other people and the environment around you, even if you don't feel that you are single-handedly changing the whole world instantly.

And perhaps that's another important point to bear in mind. It's important to retain a balanced perspective on life, and what's important in it. There are lots of things in the world that one person *can't* change on their own, and thinking we can do so is the height of deluded egotism (but alas is still a popular delusion!). We should therefore have the perspective and awareness not to base our entire sense of happiness on whether the wider world is fitting in with our priorities and values, otherwise we're going to be in for a stressful and disappointing life!

This is yet another reason why it makes sense to focus on what we can do in our own lives to be the change we want to see in the world. As we said earlier, it's

the one thing we can control in a world we can't ultimately control.

And if you're feeling isolated in your struggle for a better world, just remember this - there are millions of people who are on your side and sharing the same struggle, even they're not there with you in person. To find extra strength why not find some of these people and take part in things with them - even going on protests can remind you you're not alone. Make connections and get involved with like-minded people if you feel it will make you feel stronger and less isolated.

So, be strong and live your life according to the standards and values you'd like to see in the world - whether or not the world is currently following them. Build your sense of hope by connecting with like-minded people and knowing that you are making the world and the lives of people immediately around you better. Do these things and you *will* be changing the world.

In summary - *stay positive, strong and hopeful of a better world.*

Further reading

Hope In The Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities by Rebecca Solnit, Canongate, London 2016

Man's Search For Meaning: The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust by Viktor E Frankl, Rider, London 2004

Final thoughts

Incorporate the principles in this booklet into your life and you will make the world better - not only in a meaningful, significant way for yourself and those around you, but also by acting as a beacon for others and for society. You'll be setting a lived example of the world you want to see. You will also have lived a life to feel proud of.

Each of the points in this publication is not just a principle we should incorporate into our own lives. We also want a society that encourages and fosters these sorts of attitudes and values. So, we need to let politicians know that this is what we demand of them if they want to secure our votes in the future.

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3   Interview with Woman's Own, 23 Sept 1987

4   Flat Earth News by Nick Davies, Vintage, London 2009, p.52

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6   At the same time - essays and speeches, Susan Sontag, Picador USA, 2007

"The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope."

Barack Obama

Manifesto for life

Many people are worried about the direction the world is going in at the moment, but feel powerless to do anything about it. This booklet shows how each of us can do something extremely powerful, which is to live our own lives the way we think the world should be. This will not only directly improve the lives of people around us, but also acts as a clear statement of intent for the world we want to see.

This booklet gives 10 principles to incorporate into your life, to help you be the change you want to see in the world.