

Human doing? Human being?

Have you ever wondered why life isn't going the way you wanted? **JONNE CESERANI** outlines his strategy for getting your life on a positive track.

Surviving in a messy world



The world is a messy place. Some people think it would be nice if we could tidy it up and have predictability, some peace and quiet; however the world is not like that. You need to be creative and innovative in your outlook to prepare yourself for survival.

Some things in life are complicated, car factories and aeroplanes for example. This means they can be hard to comprehend and some of us never will; yet they are comprehensible, they can be controlled and they operate predictably.

Many things in life are complex, social policy and transportation for example. Complex systems have so many variables, many not understood, many we are not even aware of, that they cannot be predicted. People try and much energy is given to creating models to do this. It must be clear to every one that the models for our transportation systems consistently get it wrong.

This is not necessarily a criticism of modelling. People are trying to do their best to respond to a messy world and survive it.

The mistake is to believe you are right and you have the right answer. Nobody does! To survive a messy world you have to stay alert and aware of what is happening around you. Notice what 'is' rather than what you 'assume' and respond to this in flexible ways until you get a result that is useful, (useful, not right or wrong). If what you do does not get a useful result stop doing it and do something else!

I am taking very high-level view so how can this view be used to describe specific ways to survive in a messy world?

One of my colleagues was talking to me one day. She was very successful with a great business career and a lively social life. She told me a story about a time when another colleague had walked up to her and said, "The trouble with you is you are a human doing, not a human being." What was meant by this was that she was so busy being focused on getting the job done, on being a part of instant results both commercially and socially, that she never stopped to check if what she was doing was really achieving anything sustainable. *Her social life was driven more by instant gratification than taking time with the music and the painting that was more naturally a part of her.*

A recipe for surviving a messy world

Get yourself tooled up! Become a human doing!

A craftsman apprentice who seeks to become a master has both to learn the tools of the trade and build a high level of ability to use the tools, and create a mindset to have the vision to build wonderful things.

The tools first! There are simple tools that can be used to create amazing effects. The chisels of the stone carver are simple tools and look at the wonderful carvings that can result.

Life is a series of meetings. Many of them involve problem solving. Most of us are quite good at conversation. The mistake we make is to assume we are also good at meetings and problem solving because meetings are just conversation too. They are not! *One of my clients saved £100,000 on one meeting alone by restructuring it and getting more focus. Additionally they get more work done in less time and people enjoy the meeting so the quality of work is higher.*

- Meetings only work well if the roles of the participants are clear and are kept to during the meeting.
- Use formal structures for meetings so that discussion and debate is focused and everyone gets a chance to participate. Free discussion is invariably circular and repetitive and the loudest voice says most.
- When problem solving divide the meeting up. Get ideas first, then decide which ones look interesting, then begin to evaluate them and turn them into solutions. This way the first ideas get a chance to breath rather than being jumped on immediately.

- During the meeting capture your thoughts by using a notepad. The day dreaming moments for which you were admonished at school are your most valuable resources for ideas. Your mind has a great capability to connect random thoughts and invent new ideas. Use it.
- Give ideas as headline statements so that every one knows what you are thinking. Make it a sentence, not just one word, then others will be stimulated to have other ideas.
- Have a care about how you treat one another's ideas. Most people are positively disposed to offer helpful suggestions, even if the way they do so sometimes does not seem that way. Check it out if you think you disagree, assume positive intention and respond on that basis.
- When you evaluate new thinking always focus on the plus side first before looking at how the idea can be improved. All ideas have some value and by looking for it you often find more than you bargained for.

By using simple behavioural tools like the ones described above you can begin to create more supportive cultures for meetings and problem solving. You will save time, get more work done and relieve much of the tension and frustration that is a part of many meetings. You will also save a lot of money, just calculate the cost of the time spent in meetings.

Know where you are going! Become a human being!

There is a passage in Alice in Wonderland where she arrives looking lost and spots a 'Cheshire puss'. She asks it where she should go and it responds by asking her where she would like to get to. Alice replies that she does not much care in which case the 'Cheshire puss' points out she could go in any direction as she is sure to arrive somewhere eventually.

Many people run their lives like this. Life continues down a track, soon to become a rut. No thought went into the direction. Maybe that person was being opportunist because something turned up and now they never seem to get the time to reflect on other places they might go.

People who operate in only one way are like robots, only suited to a narrow band of circumstances.

Surviving a messy life means you can never know what will turn up so you need lots of choices of ways to respond in order to have flexibility. Flexible people are more likely to have a useful response and are more likely to find more useful responses that get them a desirable result.

Take the time to work out what you want in your life and where you want to get to.

Think about what you want to be remembered for when people talk about you.

Think about all the things you have done in your life really well and begin to list your capabilities, skills and aptitudes. Start to match these to things you might do with your life.

Look for recurring themes as you list how you achieved those things. Create a list that includes academic, work, home, social and leisure activities. A human being lives life using all of their resources, not just work related ones.

Look at people you admire for some achievement of quality they bring to the world. Talk to them and ask them how they do that, or get them to describe how they plan before acting and what goes on in their heads when they are acting.

Some of these people will likely be world figures. In this case read about them. Many will either have an autobiography or a biographer. I think of current high performers like Ellen Macarthur in the sailing world. David Beckham in the football world. Madonna in the music world. Hugh Grant in films. Richard Branson in commerce.

Use these people as your unofficial mentors who can provide you with guidance about some of the qualities that may help you to succeed. Take from them the qualities you can use and those you cannot, leave to one side.

Look at how extremes work. Saddam Hussein is extremely successful! I do not condone him, but what can you learn about alternative choices to deal with a situation by noticing how he work? A choice that has unacceptable consequences now does not mean you cannot learn from it and use that same choice in a new way to get positive acceptable outcomes.

Finally think about perception, communication and influencing skills. Who you are and how you are as a human being will be determined by the skills you have in these three areas because these are the skills that you use to be you, to be a personality and to be a human being. (NLP, Neuro Linguistic Programming is a great tool for exploring these areas.)

Recognising your talents in these areas is key to knowing yourself. Only by knowing yourself can you begin to know others. Armed with this knowledge and the tools of the trade of commerce, meetings and problem solving, you can raise your chances of working collaboratively with others.

You will also have choice. Everything you do in your life is your choice! Be a human doing and a human being, create lots of choices and then the ones you make will more often be satisfying and useful. You will also be able to live a life of integrity. Enjoy!!!

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