

- THE FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE -

HOW TO GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER IN THIS CAPITALIST HELLSCAPE

A quick how-to guide to change your perspective, get that bread and keep up the fight

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Table of contents

I. You're Not Betraying
Yourself

II. It Doesn't Have to Be
Dreadful

III. It's All About Your
Priorities and Vision



I. YOU'RE NOT BETRAYING YOURSELF

Unless you have been born into an autonomous off the grid community, you have no choice but to participate in capitalism. This is part of why capitalism is oppressive: we don't really have a choice, but to participate. And it sucks. And to participate in capitalism is not betraying yourself: it's just a fact that sucks.

There is no ethical consumption under capitalism, like there is no perfect ethical ways to make money under capitalism. There's always options worse than others, and we hope we will not have to chose the worst options (if we have the option to choose at all), but regardless of this, we got to eat and have a roof on top of our heads.

Our basic needs are to be honoured, or all the rest will fall apart. You can know your theory by heart, but if you can't provide yourself food, theory is just theory, it won't fill your stomach. Our survival instincts make us

quite aware of that. But you'll need some money, some capital, too to escape and/or disrupt capitalism.

The whole system is against us. Poverty is one of the biggest traps (aims?) of it all. It's not our fault if we're broke. But it's still our responsibility to try to escape this precarity. While solidarity can help us thrive, we also have to do our part as individuals. Money gives us resilience. Money gives us a little power. So you're not betraying yourself for wanting money.

Money, in and on itself, is not evil. In *Your Money or Your Life*, Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez point out that, while we can debate for hours on what really is money, we can simply state that “Money is something you trade your life energy for. You sell your time for money.”

Robin and Dominguez are Flers, or “adepts of Financial Independence“. While the literature about financial independence can be quite alienating sometimes (and not very anticapitalist, and also individualistic), there is still some wisdom hidden there. But what is financial

independence in the first place? It can take many forms, depending on the person. For some, it's to be able to work only half of the year. For others, it's to be able to retire at 35. For me, it's to be able to work as little as possible in order to have more time to focus on what really matters to me, i.e. my activism.

Just like you (most probably), I have been envisioning the future with anxiety for a long time. No career looked attractive to me, and when I started to learn about anticapitalism and Marxism, I was even less enthusiast at the idea of joining the workforce and being exploited. I burned out when I had three jobs while being a full-time university student. I stopped university and tried to do a 9 to 5 job and the anxiety it gave me inflated into terrible chronic pain. But after hours of ruminating, I decided I would try to get a new perspective on it all.

That's when I came back to my financial independence books I have read when I was younger and less radicalized. I remembered there was plenty of Fiers out there. The socioeconomic background we are against

might get worse with the years to come, and it surely is worse than when Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez first published their book *Your Money or Your Life* in 1992. Nonetheless, we can still look up to those people who decided to hack the system and take their best tricks.

II. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE DREADFUL

Forget for a minute that the commodification of everything is a pain. And remember, even if you need to work, *working doesn't have to be the finality of your life.*

Now here's two options (or battle plans) to envision the future in a less anxiety-inducing way.

Option A : Find a working opportunity that gives you (some sort of) meaning.

Option B : Flow it out, and disrupt if possible.

So the option A is quite self-explanatory. If you really want to help homeless people for say, and you can find an opportunity where you can do this in exchange of money, go for it. For sure, it will make work more bearable. But don't fall into the Do What You Love trap, like Miya Tokumitsy comments in her text *In the Name of Love* :

By keeping us focused on ourselves and our individual happiness, [the Do What You Love mantra] distracts us from the working conditions of others while validating our own choices and relieving us from obligations to all who labor, whether or not they love it. It is the secret handshake of the privileged and a worldview that disguises its elitism as noble self-betterment. According to this way of thinking, labor is not something one does for compensation, but an act of self-love. If profit doesn't happen to follow, it is because the worker's passion and determination were insufficient. Its real achievement is making workers believe their labor serves the self and not the marketplace.

Of course, by suggesting here to take a job that gives you meaning, I am not advocating for a blind uncritical approach to work. I am rather stating that if you are privileged enough to be able to choose an option that can bring you a little extra of “happiness points“, you should take advantage of it.

Option B might seem a bit unclear, sounding more like a yoga instruction than a path to financial stability. I used this phrasing because it takes from the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly's theory and book *Flow*. Csikszentmihaly starts with the premise that "Subjective experience is not just one of the dimensions of life, it is life itself." Therefore, in his opinion, one way to be happy is to be able to cultivate flow, "The state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter", a sort of mindfulness in action. In a summary of the book, we can read that :

To achieve flow, you need 3 things:

1. Realistic goals

2. Your skills match the opportunities for action

3. Complete focus is on the activity

The author advocates that one can develop "autotelic" traits — auto (self) + telos (goal) — to better be able to find flow in the most mundane work.

It might look esoteric, but this is a mindset with which I

like to dive into work. Boring tasks as a portal for mindfulness. That's how I survived most of my student jobs actually. I also think that reclaiming hours from those "bullshit jobs", where you are paid for nothing or useless work, to advance on personal projects (if possible) is a good way to "take advantage" of the system and to feel a little bit less alienated.

It is a very soft form of disruption, but disruption can take many flavors depending on the context and your risk-tolerance. Stealing or sabotage in a Luddite spirit could be another way. In his latest book, *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Are Right About Why You Hate Your Job*, Gavin Mueller explores just that. In a review of the book, it is said that :

While sabotage often conjures up images of smashing machinery, Mueller draws our attention to acts of sabotage that are less apparent but widespread. In the office, employees use their knowledge of company computer systems to blame delays on computer errors. Or in the factory, where one worker 'accidentally' broke her machine when they wanted a half day off.

So we can be creative in our ways to sublime our hatred of capitalism. Another idea that could help us go through a job that doesn't align with our values is entryism. Entryism is defined on Wikipedia as

a political strategy in which an organisation or state encourages its members or supporters to join another, usually larger, organization in an attempt to expand influence and expand their ideas and program.

After all, if we never leave our circle of radicalized friends, we have less chance to rally new people to our cause! So let's make it a game : whoever turns the most coworkers into anarcho-syndicalists wins!

III. IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR PRIORITIES AND VISION

We don't want to navigate life mindlessly. We want to be in the driver seat. This applies here. While it is perfectly legitimate to first focus on basic needs when it comes to making money, we still want to take a look at the bigger picture.

To begin with, those precise basic needs need to be assessed. How much does it cost every month to pay the rent, the grocery, the bills, etc. in total? Then add to this the others expanses that don't show in this monthly total, like tuition, insurances, etc. Look at the other purchases that fall into the cracks, like the books you bought on a whim, this visit at the thrift store, the late Friday night food delivery.

Use the method you want to calculate all those expanses. And then compare with how much you make. Is it enough to pay it all and save money or not? If you answer yes, the path to our anticapitalist version

of financial independence might be easier on you. If your answer is no, let's take a minute to understand what is the problem.

So when I said earlier that financial independence literature can be alienating, it is namely because it often doesn't take in consideration systemic oppression. It often doesn't consider the fact that some people start poorer than others and that those people will face many more barriers in their journey. So please be benevolent with me : if one of my sentence can come off as accuser, as if I am saying that it is your fault if you're struggling financially, it is not my intention to erase the systemic oppression many of us experience. But there is always a better way to think about money and handle it, and that's what I try to convey to you here.

So if you answered no to the last question, the goal would be to come up with a plan to lower the expenses and/or raise the incomes. Easier said than done, I know. That will sometimes require great anticapitalist creativity. But like Keller Easterling in *Medium Design* :

Knowing How to Work on the World said “Obligations are more empowering than freedom.”

But let's turn our attention on the topic of priorities and vision. First, priorities. We must define them. What is the most important thing for you? To have more free time in the short-term? To be able to buy some land in the forest? To not have a boss? As an example, one of my priorities, as stated earlier, is my activism, therefore I am looking for ways I can work as little as possible to have more time available for it. Another priority of mine is my health : I suffer from chronic pain, chronic pain that becomes worse when I am anxious. Therefore, I know I don't want to work in a stressful environment, or jobs that require me to be seated for too long as it triggers my chronic pain. I don't exactly care if I have a boss or not. I'd rather not, but to be without a boss is not part of my priorities.

To find what is the most important for you is a good way to enforce boundaries that will protect your sanity. It's also important to be very honest and open-minded when it comes to that step. Don't discredit a priority

just because it doesn't seem like something you can honour right away. And when I said you need to be open-minded, I also meant that you need to actually be open to the idea that you might change a lot of things in your life to honour the priorities you will set.

The priorities and the vision are often quite entangled. But what I have in mind when I talk about the vision is something like a goal. Why do you make money? Yes, paying the bills and survive, but after that? Do you want to retire early to go into politics? Do you want to start a coop with some friends?

Your vision doesn't need to be political. Your vision is just something that helps you going. That gives you a little bit of meaning. That helps you unalienate yourself.

But what you are doing here is political. We are trying to hack the game, because we refuse the narratives that we need to spend most of our waking hours working for somebody else for most of our lives.

Because we realized that this initial discourse about the fact that we need to “make a living“ is actually more like a “make a dying“, as Robin and Dominguez say, we decided to not conform.

We’ll be grateful along the way for the material comfort our labor can bring us, but we’ll never be satisfied with the way things are. We’ll make money to be a little bit more free and to fight fire with fire.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Behind The Happy Anticapitalist hides Ariane. They are a polymath, activist, writer and tarot reader based in Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) in so-called Canada.

Their climate activism got them winning the Lieutenant Governor's Youth Medal in 2020. Since then, they divested a little bit from climate activism to focus more on inclusivity and mental health issues.

You can book them a tarot reading to help you navigate your anticapitalist journey through their [Etsy shop](#).

Otherwise, you can find them in their [digital garden](#) and on social media at [@TheHappyAnticapitalist](#).

