

Lifestyle choices

The more I go about everyday life, the more I realize that our lifestyle choices are the most critical thing to consider when it comes to overall happiness and flourishing. I find that maximizing your lifestyle, to your essence, to your core, to who you truly are, is more important than how much money you have in a bank account.

I'm the happiest I have ever been in my life

At this point in my life, I can honestly affirm that I have the perfect lifestyle and have reached peak flourishing. I essentially find myself in a mode of living that I can repeat every single day for the rest of my life and be overly happy about it every single day. I'm waking up at dawn and going to bed extremely early, just because I hate sleeping and want to wake up for the next day so that I can continue living. The days are like a lifetime for me, and every moment is cherished to the maximum. I just absolutely love my life, my lifestyle, and the choices I've made to get me to the point that I am at right here, right now. I have zero regrets and look forward to the future. I find that making the effort to align with my authentic and truest form has set me free, sending me to a place of flourishing.

Work on your street photography with the work ethic and discipline of a Spartan

As soon as you wake up, instead of grabbing your stupid phone, why not pick up your camera? I think that the camera is my sword, my weapon of choice, and I always need it with me. As soon as I wake up, I grab my camera and go, despite the lack of available light outside. I know that I can always make photographs, despite where I am, and I understand that the medium of photography is light itself. Light is changing and provides me with some gradual differences that I can draw from, creating something from nothing. The main subject of street photography is the

mundane anyway, and our ultimate aim is to elevate the mundane, from the ordinary to the extraordinary. This is the ultimate challenge! And why wouldn't you want a challenge? That is what makes street photography so great.

Out with the old in with the new

I think we must get over these old modes of operation when it comes to the way that we photograph. Forget about film photography, even forget about Fujifilm at this point, with their aperture rings and shutter speed dials, etc. If Fuji and Leica want to step their game up, they must make a camera that is compact and better than the Ricoh GR. Otherwise, just set everything else to the side and use the most modern, compact, fast tool possible in the current year of 2024. If Garry Winogrand were born today, he would choose the tool that makes the job as fast, easy, and painless as possible. He would choose something like a Ricoh or a compact digital camera that would allow him to set it and forget it. Another thought: why are we so obsessed with the book, gallery, or zine still in 2024? All of these physical ways of presenting work are so boring to me. Sure, a book could be cool to have, put on your coffee table, or show your family and friends, whatever. But ultimately, the future is digital, and we must wake up to this fact as soon as possible. What can we do about it? How can we move forward into the future in this brave new world of photography?

Childlike spirit forever

When I go out into the world with my camera, I treat it like play. I don't take myself so seriously, and I enjoy treating the world as a playground. Maybe the street itself is the ultimate playground for an adult, and the camera gives me the excuse to return to the childlike state of curiosity. Curiosity fuels my everyday life. This is my ultimate aim as a photographer anyway, to increase my curiosity by one percent each day. I believe that we get hardened by society as we get older; however, to remain curious like a child is very virtuous.

What are the virtues of being a child?

A child is unhardened by the world, has no preconceptions of the world, and is pure and innocent. I believe that returning to this innocent state is extremely virtuous because it allows you to be without the constraints of societal norms. As a street photographer, it is the most liberating form of art because of its disconnect from all societal norms, morals, and ethics. You essentially create your own guidelines and your own rules to play the game, similar to a child stepping onto the playground, inventing a new game with his friends.

You can create a new world

You can create a new world in a fraction of a second with the superpower of photography. For me, this idea is just as simple as making a photograph, but it has to do with the way in which I conduct myself throughout my life. When I consider this idea of a “new world,” I actually believe it to be a more spiritual or metaphysical thought. If you consider this notion of time, on how you spend your time, or what you are paying attention to, this way in which you go about your everyday life ultimately determines your worldview, your perception of reality. Through the medium of photography, I’m creating a new world, not only by pressing the shutter and making something but also in the way in which I’m spending my time and focusing my attention on the details. By finding myself lost in the details, I find God. There is something special and magnificent about remaining present in the moment itself, forgetting about the past, not worrying about the future, and living in the eternal now, creating in a stream of becoming. This abundant state, this flow of production, is what fuels me throughout my life, remaining present, creating a new world through my thoughts, my vision, my decisions, and the photographs that I make.

Lifestyle choices

I feel that hormones determine everything. Think about it, if your hormones are unbalanced, you’re not going to make the right decisions. If your hormones are balanced, you are cool, calm, and collected. You will have the judgment, temperance, and wisdom to decide what is right from wrong. However, with

imbalanced hormones, making the wrong decisions is an inevitable outcome. So, with this in mind, perhaps it is most wise for us to align physically with our bodies. If you consider the physical body as the soul, I believe this is virtuous.

Why consider the body the soul?

When I consider the body as the soul, I consider all of the decisions that I make along my journey. The things that I do or don't do are ultimately going to be on display on the body that I make. When you consider the things that I consume, whether media or food, this will inevitably display within my mood, my face, and my physical body. Think of somebody who is hardened by all of the simple things like media, causing anxiety and fear. Wrinkles will appear on your face, you will grow a bit older, faster, and you might not have a smile on your face. Or, consider someone who consumes junk food, smokes cigarettes, etc. Their skin will become bleak and brittle, their nails will turn yellow, and their bellies will be full of fat. I think that these thoughts are actually so simple, yet so profound to me. Even if you consider the simple Christian notion that we are all created in God's image, I feel as though it rings true. And there's a reason why fasting is so critical within a lot of faiths: it's because it returns you to your pure, innocent, childlike state. When you fast, you are not only removing the toxins from your body and giving your body the ability to regenerate cells, but you're also shedding fat, physiologically becoming more beautiful, stronger, and more resilient. You are returning to the purest form of yourself, physically, created in His image.

Outdoor paradise

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

I remember waking up each morning, putting on my uniform, and heading to Catholic school as a young boy. Each morning, we would recite the pledge of allegiance and the Lord's Prayer. In the prayer, we say that what will be done on earth will be done in heaven, that a kingdom is coming, or in other words, "as above, so below." When I think of this, I think of paradise, and what that means to me. What if paradise or the kingdom is a metaphor for where we find ourselves in our everyday lives? Perhaps paradise is within our hearts, our souls, our bodies, or the physical world around us immediately. We can create paradise through the decisions that we make, through the way in which we treat our brothers, sisters,

and neighbors. We can create paradise here on this planet, on earth, in this three-dimensional realm that we exist in throughout our lifetime. It's a matter of the individual aligning with nature and the highest version of themselves, striving for more, striving for excellence with power, vigor, vitality, peace, creativity, curiosity, and courage at the forefront, in order to get us to that place. I believe that the outdoor space around us, within nature itself, is paradise. Just go sit in nature, go for a walk, go for a hike, go listen to the sound of the birds and the insects humming, feel the breeze, and feel the sand between your toes on the beach. These physical, natural things are so profound, yet we stay away from them in modernity. Think of the typical person in the modern world: waking up, checking the phone, going to the car, driving to work, sitting under fluorescent lights, enjoying the air conditioners, looking at a computer screen. Everything is unnatural and unaligned with nature. The more that we return to nature, the more that we return to paradise. The more that we stay away from nature, the more we create a hell for us on earth. I really believe that the decisions that we make ultimately create paradise, or vice versa, on earth. As above, so below...

Treehouse peace

When I was a young boy, I explored in the woods. I used to make teepees with sticks, spears, carve paths, climb trees, build bridges with stones, explore caves, etc. I feel as though my time spent in the woods at a very young age taught me self-sufficiency, courage, and curiosity. I'm very grateful for these experiences because they made me the brave person that I am to this day. Now, as an adult, I spend my afternoons in the treehouse that I found in Fairmount Park Forest. When I explore these trails and spend time alone each and every day for at least an hour or two, I feel at peace. There is a Zen, tranquil state that I enter when I watch the way the leaves fall from the trees as the seasons change. There's a feeling that I get within my soul, my body, my bones, where a chill is sent down my spine, and I feel ever so aligned. It is so profound, so blissful, so Zen, that I cannot even describe the feeling. However, what I know is, this place, this symposium of mine, is my new happy place. This treehouse is my new paradise. And what I realized is, as a sidenote or a random thought, do we even have time to read books in this modern world anymore? I've been reading for at least half an hour to an hour each day in my treehouse, and I feel so great doing so. I feel like this is something that we don't do anymore. Maybe there's just not enough time in the day, generally, for people to

read? Sure, I see lots of people reading in the park, etc., on the weekends or whatever, but it still feels as though we don't have as much time to read anymore as we used to.

Soma is the iPhone

Every morning when I take the bus, I can't help but notice how every single human that is sitting down is staring at a phone or listening to music in their ears. These devices, this technology, is suppressing an entire generation, creating miserable souls. This may seem very judgmental or extreme, but when you really think about the way in which these iPhones are oppressing us, it becomes so evident that it is not necessarily a good thing. You can't even go on the bus and start a conversation with anybody anymore because they close themselves off with condoms in their ears. Also, the content that they consume on their phones—these ridiculous TikToks, dating apps, and extreme news that promotes hate and fear. There's no sense of community anymore, even within a bus. The only person I can ever chat with is either the bus driver or the old lady that doesn't use a phone. Strange times. Everyone is suppressed, enslaving themselves to technology. The industry of evolution certainly has its advantages, and I'm forever grateful for it, but it will inevitably lead to our decline, as we intertwine our daily lives with novelty through technology as a replacement for community or family.

Hedonism world

Everything in this modern world is geared towards hedonistic pleasure-seeking. Whether it's the dopamine hit you get from using the phone, the ice cream you lick on a cone, the meaningless sex you engage in, or the super materials that you purchase with your dollars, we have become consumer slaves in a world that was created for us to be producers. Even think of the food pyramid and the way in which it describes the top of the pyramid, to eat red meat sparingly. This, to me, is the ultimate deception and really shapes my perspective on how I view this idea of consumer versus producer. The less red meat you eat, the less satiated you will be, the hungrier you will be, and the more you will be dependent on other foods. However, for two years now, essentially experimenting with an extreme diet—the carnivore diet, eating nothing but meat—I literally never feel hungry. I have an

insane amount of power, shedding fat and gaining muscle. I feel the best that I ever have in my entire life, haven't been sick once, and feel just so great physically, spiritually, and mentally. Now, for two years, I've essentially not used money one time other than to buy meat. If I don't need to spend money, then what is the function of money? Genuinely, this is a strange and alarming thought. We have enslaved ourselves to these bureaucratic systems that essentially make you go through 1000 hoops just to get a piece of meat on your plate. My thought is, purchasing things is for women? I seriously don't see a single thing on the market that's worth purchasing anymore. Not even the fancy cars and the masculine things that are typically geared towards men, like watches, cars, boats, and all the other stupid things you can buy. Honestly, all the stupid things that people buy, it's just marketed for women. Just think of all these makeup brands, beauty products, clothing, etc. It's all geared towards women. What I'm trying to say is, men don't really need to buy anything. Maybe men only buy things so that they can give them to a woman, support a woman, protect a woman? I think the reality is, all advertisements and marketing in modern-day media are geared towards making women buy things. Or if not women, just very low testosterone men? When you're truly aligned with your primal nature, and your hormones are extremely balanced, as a man, you realize that you actually don't need anything that this modern world tries to sell you, and it has you question the value of this society that is geared towards hedonism and comfort.

The problem with materialism

I think the ultimate problem with materialism, or just purchasing things in general to augment self-esteem, self-worth, etc., is the fact that it drives us away from the bigger questions in life, such as what is the essence of being human, what is God, why are we here, and what is the connection between man and nature? The more we are out of alignment with nature, the closer we become to our base instincts in this modern world to consume or to purchase materials. I think because we are so comfortable in our modern lives, whether at the workplace or in our little shoebox homes in the big cities, we are further away from finding deeper meaning in life and replace it by purchasing things. We are numbing ourselves to the media on our phone screens, minimizing the suffering that we feel with distractions. However, when you remove these feelings of sadness and suffering, you also remove the feeling of immense joy. I feel like we're being numbed down to a base level of just

mediocrity, but I seek even deeper lows and higher highs. Ultimately, when you remove suffering, you remove what binds us together as humans. If we're all just perfectly comfortable and perfectly happy with our perfectly mediocre lives, will we ever truly strive for excellence or greatness? This is the problem because suffering is what binds us together as humans. Suffering is that thing that keeps us together, that reminds us what it is to be human, and that has us relate to each other. Maybe life truly is suffering, and we shouldn't forget that.

Carpe Diem

Our new motto is to seize the day! What if today was your last? I treat each morning like a miniature birth and each night before I go to sleep like a miniature death. Just assume you won't wake up the next day, and when you do, wake up, get your ass outside immediately. Rejoice and be glad, for the day is good. I find this feeling of alignment, with each day as a lifetime, brings me immense gratitude, joy, and abundance in life. I can't help but share how great the feeling is when you treat each day like your last, when you seize each moment and fulfill your destiny. Just love the fate, embrace the fate, don't worry about the outcome, and embrace play. Let's make this our greatest day of all time, let's sing and dance like it is our last. Let's create the event of an epic drama, a magnificent display, and live our lives like a living work of art for God to witness.

The process brings meaning

The most liberating way to approach making anything is detaching from the outcome and finding meaning and joy in the process itself. Even me writing this right now, I am merely following my curiosities, my stream of consciousness, and letting my soul pour out onto this phone as I voice dictate my words from my mouth. There is something liberating about using a GoPro to share your thoughts or even a camera to photograph freely, treating it like a visual diary. Treat everything that you create, make, or photograph, like a stream of becoming, like you're augmenting your thoughts, your mind, your soul. There is no reason to be perfect, for we are all imperfect creatures in this world. Let us make the process our meaning and forget about external validation. Frankly, I don't need your validation! I don't need anybody to understand why or what I am doing. I am doing what I do

because I'm the best at what I do. I'm doing what I do because I know that I am enjoying each day, the process, and the endless stream of becoming my true and authentic self.