



Top 10 List

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Get a life, not just a lifestyle.

1. Understand that there is difference between living life and having a lifestyle.

There's an ad for a financial services firm that goes like this: "Are you working for a living or are you working for a life?" I'll change it a bit to read: "Are you working for a lifestyle or are you living your life?" Life and lifestyle are both synonymous and mutually exclusive, depending on how you look at this. The key question to ask yourself is "How much of my life is being consumed by my lifestyle?"

2. Start learning about different ways of living.

I am shocked sometimes by how few options people feel that they have, or how they've rarely considered how they might live their life differently. So, look around and notice who has a life (or even a lifestyle!) that you find intriguing. Then, have lunch with this person and ask them lots of questions about how they live, what's important to them, how have they changed their life or lifestyle significantly and what other changes they may want to make.

3. Identify what about your life isn't really you at all.

We're all products of our culture and our environment, peer pressure and

group norms, of advertising and the desire to get ahead, and so forth. Few of us really examine who we are; it's often easier to live a role or have the right car. It's safe to say that most people haven't really chosen their lives; they've only chosen their lifestyle -- or perhaps, a lifestyle has chosen them. Break the cycle by working with a coach who can help you identify what about yourself and about life is most fundamentally most important to you.

4. Identify what is natural for you, even if not normal for others.

Of the 200+ countries in our world, Americans are thought to be the most individualist of all cultures. We tend to do what we want and to heck with what others think. (Well, compared to your average Brit, anyway.) The trend of 'doing your own thing' continues and it's accelerating. At one point, let's say in the 60's, doing your own thing was as much as doing the opposite of convention as it was doing something of your own design. But we have gotten better and better at this skill set and the entrepreneur movement in America is one piece of evidence. Today, we have the tools and the technology to afford to do our own thing professionally. Creativity and freedom are held in high regard and normalcy is often scoffed at. You now do have the societal and cultural freedom (even more than you may realize) to discover and orient around what is natural for you, because normal isn't natural for many. Now, just give yourself this freedom.

5. Lifestyles are expensive to support and prevent you from evolving.

If you're living paycheck to paycheck and supporting your lifestyle more than saving money, your lifestyle is too expensive. You're trapped in it; you must keep working in the job you have, in order to afford your lifestyle. I'm not knocking lifestyle. I'm just pointing out that as long as you feel the pull to fund a lifestyle and you can't afford to stop working, your rate of development/evolution will be much slower than it could be. Rapid personal development occurs when you have the time, space and reserves to afford to experiment with new ways of thinking, working and living. If you're living wonderfully, yet close to the edge, you can't really afford to progress in some very important ways, and you probably won't be attractive. A lifestyle is generally seductive; a person is attractive. Take your pick. (Note: If you have plenty of reserves, enjoy your lifestyle completely! But if not, simplify.)

6. Identify who gives you life, and who are merely players in your lifestyle.

One's lifestyle has a theatrical element to it. Everything from valet parkers to tailors, housekeepers to architects, and Starbucks to Lutece. Again, I'm not knocking wonderfully rich lifestyles at all! I'm just suggesting that you identify who it is who adds joy and energy to your life vs who merely supports, entertains or assists you.

7. Downsize, rightsize or even toss out your current lifestyle, just for the shock of it.

Most of my clients refuse to downsize their lifestyle until they experience a crisis of money, divorce or health problems. Oh well. I've given up pestering them, but I am also not surprised when I see them struggling to become more attractive. They can't figure out why it's not working as easily as advertised. The primary reason? They are unwilling to give up some of the trappings they have. To them, downsizing their lifestyle means to go the Caribbean instead of to Australia, business class instead of first class, an Infiniti instead of a Lexus. Again, I'm not knocking luxury; I live luxuriously. But my lifestyle is optional (meaning it's fun, it's not my identity) and it's something that I'd immediately downscale at any sign of financial concern. I don't suggest that my clients become monks and go ascetic; but if their lifestyle is constricting their ability to be themselves, they've got a problem.

8. Spend an hour and write down what an ideal life for you would look like.

Have you ever written down the people, objects, work, feelings and home which would comprise your ideal life? Why not put on some tea or coffee right now, sit in a comfy place and start writing it out? Or, you can use the online system if you'd like help getting started. It's available at <http://www.thomasleonard.com/ideal/default.html>. It's nothing fancy, but it will get you started with some good questions and choices!

9. Get to know what your Values are.

Values are those things in life which we find ourselves naturally drawn to and even desire to express. Beauty, Peace, Creativity, Discovery and Harmony are examples of values. There is a complete list of about 150 values located at <http://www.attractionu.com/21.html>.

10. Stop striving, acquiring, pushing yourself.

If you 'gave up' right now (meaning checking out of the rat race/lifestyle race), how would your life be better? How would it be different? What's the worst that could happen? What would you lose that's not replaceable?

How would you change as a person? How would you spend your time? What path might you start down that's very different from the one you're on now? What goals would you let go? How would you motivate yourself? Would you even need to? These are the questions worth asking.

