

CHAPTER 1

MONDAY MORNING MALAISE

“America’s Professional Elite: Wealthy, Successful, and Miserable.”

—THE NEW YORK TIMES HEADLINE, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

“Sunday Night is the New Monday Morning, and Workers are Miserable.”

—THE WALL STREET JOURNAL HEADLINE, JULY 7, 2019

February 2011—I flew to company headquarters in Los Angeles with the expectation and giddy hope that I would be fired. There were rumors that another round of corporate restructuring was around the corner, and I detected subtle signals. I wanted it to happen. I needed it to happen. I was *confident* it would happen.

My boss scheduled a 5 p.m. meeting on a Friday afternoon, my last session that week in LA. An encouraging sign, I thought. A classic HR move. All week I gleefully anticipated that meeting the way a child looks forward to Christmas morning. I eagerly awaited a golden parachute. I fantasized about how I would play the victim. How I would suppress the joy of terminating a seventeen-year

work relationship. Seventeen years. That was nearly half of my life. I fantasized about how liberated I would soon feel.

The 5 p.m. conversation on that Friday did not go the way I expected.

It was a business-as-usual meeting. I received more projects to tackle and things to do. “Is there anything else we need to talk about?” I asked my boss, hopefully, at the end of the meeting.

“Have a good flight” was all I got in response.

My head exploded as I left his office. Instead of liberation, I got perpetuation.

I hated that soul-sucking job. I did not know how I could face another day in that organization. Every morning my stomach churned as I drove to work. I hated the office politics. The “always-on” expectations. The 10 p.m. conference calls. The bureaucracy.

I hated everything about that job *except* for the paycheck. Then I hated myself for not having the guts to walk away from that paycheck. I felt as if I gave a small piece of my heart every time I walked into my very nice office, with its expansive views and modern furniture. I was a wage slave. Trapped. Stuck inside a “good” job at a high-profile company in a sexy industry. I had a decent personal balance sheet, but my assets were unproductive. I did not have independent cash flow. I *depended* upon that salary. Although most other aspects of my life rocked, the unhappiness at work polluted everything else.

An enriched life, this was not.

THE MANY WORK MINDSETS

Think back to last Monday morning.

During your commute into work, what was your frame of mind? Were you looking forward to the day? Or looking forward to the day being over?

If you are lucky, perhaps your thoughts were optimistic...

Financially Secure Mindset: The new project excites me. It could game-change the company and my career. Sure, it's risky, but we have a shot at making a big difference in the market. This opportunity energizes me while I work my butt off to make sure we get it right. If we do not greenlight the project, everything will be okay. I can afford to take a chunk of time off. Heck, I would enjoy some time off. Either way, I win.

Alternatively, were you less upbeat last Monday morning? Perhaps this is more familiar...

Hanging-On Mindset: I need this job. I have a kid in college and another on the way to University. I have years left on my mortgage and I'm years behind in my retirement readiness. I am screwed if the market does not recover. If the rumored restructuring happens, I'm also screwed. I have to suck up to Bob to make sure I will be safe. I can't make any ripples. Gotta make sure I survive this. I need that December bonus.

Or maybe your commuting thoughts last Monday morning were along these lines...

This Sucks Mindset: I hate this job. I cannot believe I missed seeing my son score that goal on Saturday because of that stupid

conference call with my boss. I wish Margaret would get a life so everyone else could have one, too. That fire drill last week with the Boston client. What a waste of time. My wife is still pissed that I missed dinner because of that farce. I need a drink already, and it is not even 9 a.m. I hope I can get through this bloody day without losing my mind.

Then there is that other prevalent mindset, the **This-Job-Is-Everything Mindset**.

My first encounter with this archetype occurred more than two decades ago, and it set off a personal chain reaction. Barely thirty at the time, I noticed a Japanese colleague, whom I will call Watanabe-san, standing forlornly by the window. He vacantly watched the frenzied streets thirty-two floors below. Known as a *lifer* in the company, Watanabe-san had recently learned the company no longer needed his services. He was in his early fifties. His career was over. To Watanabe-san, his career was *everything*.

“What am I going to do now, Todd-san?” he asked me. “I’ve worked for this company for my entire life. What else is there?”

I understood my colleague’s sense of nihilism entirely. Not long before, I also had a work crisis, one that shook me to the core and turned my views about work and life upside down.

It was my first job out of Columbia Business School. My dream job working for a Hollywood studio. Back then, I often laughed on paydays. It seemed outrageous to earn money from doing something I found so exciting and personally rewarding.

Then I tumbled.

I negotiated a deal with a Taiwanese company. The agreement was so important that the division president directly called me for updates. Closing this one deal would be my moment to shine.

So, what did I do? I did what any ambitious, newly minted MBA would do. I negotiated aggressively to prove myself. Too aggressively, it turned out. At 6 p.m. on a Friday, I received a terse message that said, “Thank you for your efforts, but the gap is too big. The deal is off.”

F@%#!

I scrambled through a flurry of desperate calls to my counterpart on the other side of the negotiation. It was too late. The weekend had officially begun, and this was before the age of cell phones. Reaching the client over the weekend would prove impossible. The only thing I could do was wait for a miserable Monday morning.

That weekend was excruciating. I couldn't sleep or function. I only could replay the negotiation repeatedly in my head, each time blowing the deal even more spectacularly. Why had I pushed so hard on a deal that I could not afford to lose? That weekend I sat motionless on my living room floor, propped against the couch, staring blankly at a white wall. The *shame* of blowing this deal was almost unbearable.

Sixty very dark hours later, Monday morning arrived, and so did a second chance. I groveled to the client and salvaged the deal.

Surviving that painful experience changed me, personally and professionally.

I quickly realized that the transactions would only get bigger and

the stakes higher as I progressed in my career. To maintain sanity, I needed to develop a concrete system for staying grounded when things fell apart at work, as surely they would. I needed a mechanism to keep perspective on what is most important.

I resolved never to allow work to define my self-worth and Identity. I would not defer the things that fire me up. I would not accept the default setting. A thriving career was no longer adequate. I demanded an enriched life.

I would be ready for the guy at a cocktail party who asks, so *what do you do?*

But that was not enough. As focused as I was on life goals, back then I failed to appreciate the importance of accelerating financial security. I was a rising star at work and quickly climbing the corporate ladder. At the time, I loved my job and my company. Financial security never even crossed my mind.

A decade later, financial *in*security handicapped me, and I realized that economic security is foundational. Upon this realization, I hustled to fast-track financial freedom.

Less than five years later, using the principles in this book, I achieved outright financial security. I was no longer a wage slave. Though I continued to work for several more years, employment became optional. When you *choose* to work, you *anticipate* Monday mornings.

Over the years, I have encountered many versions of Watanabesan, many Hangers-On, and many This Sucks types. These are frequently recurring characters in the corporate world. Among the independently employed, variations of these archetypes also

abound. Sometimes the corporate executive gets the wrong end of a restructuring, or a high-flying career hits a speed bump. Sometimes the workaholic lawyer burns out chasing billable hours, or the stay-at-home mom confronts an empty nest. Sometimes the consultant bows to clients, or the entrepreneur faces fundraising headwinds.

The triggers vary, but the problems are universal. Each of these people has a sense of incompleteness and imbalance—a lack of control.

Perhaps you know one of these archetypes. Maybe one of these Monday morning mindsets is uncomfortably close to home?

THE MISERY MALAISE

“You have to realize,” an accomplished attorney said over after-work cocktails, in between gulps of sherry and soda, “that 99 percent of these people are miserable. Look around you,” she wryly remarked as we surveyed the packed lounge. “They have all the money in the world. They have everything they think they are supposed to want. And they hate their lives.”

Ninety-nine percent may be a stretch. But in high-octane cities where the professional elite tends to congregate—places like New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong—it certainly *seems* like 99 percent are miserable. Want proof? Just observe the facial expressions in any elevator lobby of any prime office building in any major city on any Monday morning.

Objectively, across so many metrics, this is a great time to be alive. We should enjoy life and enjoy each other. Yet the opposite happens. There is a white-collar misery epidemic. “It’s official,”

screamed a headline in the UK newspaper *The Telegraph*. “Most people are miserable at work.”

The reality of modern professional life, chasing that elusive carrot, looks something like this:



“The trouble with being in a rat race,” quipped the comedian, Lily Tomlin, “is that even if you win the race, you’re still a rat.”

We go to the right schools, follow the rules, and pay our dues. After working so hard to climb the ladder of success, what a disappointment when we find the ladder leans against the wrong wall, to paraphrase Thomas Merton. Worse, we spend so much time building career skills, we forget to build life skills. We discover we can adeptly manage businesses but often suck when it comes to managing a personal account, advancing personal goals, and protecting non-work time.

This creates job disengagement, a deep detachment from work. Nationally, about one-third of all workers disengage, and a major-

ity wish they were working somewhere else. A 2018 Gallup study found that, at all levels, nearly 25 percent of employees feel burned out at work very often if not always.

This malaise has three root causes:

1. Financial Insecurity
2. Time Poverty
3. Stalled Progress Toward Personal Priorities

1. FINANCIAL INSECURITY

November 2019 was a blissful economic time; US unemployment was at a record low and the stock markets were at record highs. Yet, according to the US Financial Health Pulse 2019 Trends Report, only 29 percent of Americans were financially healthy. Put another way, even under almost perfect economic conditions, seven out of ten adult Americans were either “financially coping” or “financially vulnerable.” Financial insecurity persists even among high earners, who typically have expensive cost structures to accompany high salaries.

Most people equate financial security with job security. That is dangerous. Job security can diminish at all levels—including those precious white-collar jobs—because of unprecedented world events (such as the coronavirus recession) and accelerations in technological disruption, globalization, corporate consolidation, and outsourcing. “A job—once the guarantor of income security—no longer reliably plays that role,” declares *The New York Times*. Simply look at the times we are living in now. The COVID-19 pandemic walloped the economy and caused an unemployment epidemic. In April 2020, in the pandemic aftermath, US job losses went off the charts, with *just 51 percent of adult Americans occu-*

pying full-time jobs. Dependency upon a paycheck, especially a tenuous paycheck, creates a zero-sum situation. That is never a happy place to be.

2. TIME POVERTY

Time poverty is the second root cause of the misery malaise. We manage our personal time like we manage our own money, which is to say, not very well. A global study conducted in eight countries by Ernst & Young found that insufficient time accounts for four of the five biggest hurdles professionals face:

- ⑤ Getting enough sleep
- ⑤ “Finding time for me”
- ⑤ “Finding time for family and friends”
- ⑤ Additional hours worked

Many professionals feel overscheduled, overextended, overloaded, and overwhelmed. Attention spans have declined since the mobile revolution. The average attention span now lasts eight seconds, which is less than the attention span of a goldfish. Through multitasking, we somehow squeeze thirty-one hours of activity into a twenty-four-hour day.

No wonder we feel life is out of control.

For many people, a massive gap exists between how we spend our days, and how we want to spend our days. The paradox of wealth: We make more money, but not more time. For many, earning money takes less effort than gaining time.

3. STALLED PROGRESS TOWARD PERSONAL PRIORITIES

Priorities is the third root cause of the malaise. Not stalled career progress, but hampered advancement toward long-term, salient personal goals.

Take New Year's resolutions as an example. These are inherently personal and conceived to take inventory. Rarely on New Year's Eve do we pledge work goals. This is a private moment to commit, or recommit, to whatever we think will improve our well-being in the coming year. It does not take long to abandon these personal goals. According to *US News & World Report*, 80 percent of us fail to achieve our New Year's resolutions; most people quit within six weeks of starting.

This malaise might affect women even more. In December 2019, women held the majority of jobs in the US. Working women extend hours in the office without reducing domestic responsibilities, reports *The Wall Street Journal*. As a result, women shortchange sleep, socializing, and relaxation.

Sometimes this misery malaise causes acute symptoms, such as my state-of-mind during my final months at the Hollywood studio, when I was eager to be fired. But more commonly, the problem manifests as negative sentiments such as unhappiness, stress, frustration, fear, anger, loneliness, apathy, or even helplessness. These dispiriting emotions drain energy and suck the life out of life.

Enough about the problem. This book provides strategies to help you reclaim and enrich your life.

THE SOLUTION

The Oxford English Dictionary says to enrich is to:

- ⑤ Improve or enhance the quality or value of
- ⑥ Make (someone) wealthy or wealthier

The ENRICH methodology delivers this. Through a six-step process, ENRICH teaches you how to accelerate financial security, create time wealth, and Ignite what's most important. In short, this book empowers you to create the *life you really want*. The progress you make day-to-day and month-to-month may be incremental. The cumulative impact of these strategies transforms.



Step I: Essentialize. The first step addresses that tasty question—what makes life delicious?

Step II: Narrow. Prioritize your priorities. Avoid the default setting. If you do not define your priorities, someone else will.

Step III: Reach. An enriched life does not happen accidentally. It requires setting compelling goals and relentless Intentionality to get to where you want to go. This step is the heart of ENRICH. You'll create a Life Plan and build Annual Financial Plans. You'll also learn how to future-proof your finances and reverse the financial paradigm. Hint: work *your* money, rather than work *for* money.

Step IV: Ignite. Convert your plans to reality with actionable strategies to get going, maintain momentum, and overcome fear.

Step V: Calibrate. Enhance life’s deliciousness, at work and home.

Step VI: Harness Time. When you control your time, you control your life.

These six steps evolve from theorizing to goal setting to planning to doing. To put action to these core strategies, ENRICH presents an extensive tool kit with more than eighty tactics. Eleven “Take Action” exercises help put these principles into practice. Appendices I and II contain cheat sheet summaries of all these tools and tactics.

Finally, a couple of caveats about this method: the process takes commitment and hard work. “There are no shortcuts to any place worth going,” the soprano Beverly Sills said fondly. Also, be ready to stretch your mind, as some of the strategies challenge mainstream convictions, and quite possibly your own.

ENRICH: KEY TAKEAWAYS: MONDAY MORNING MALAISE

Chasing that elusive carrot is the default setting for many professionals. Just because seemingly 99 percent of the professional population is miserable does not mean you must be. Your mindset on Monday mornings and the overall quality of your life reflect your choices. There is a viable and empowering alternative to the misery malaise.

- ⑤ The Monday Morning Malaise is real—and common.
- ⑤ This unhappiness stems from financial insecurity, time poverty, and a disconnect with what’s most important.
- ⑤ ENRICH empowers you to create the life you want.

We’re ready for the first ENRICH step. In the next chapter, we

encounter the concept of “Essentialize”—to savor the ingredients that make life delicious. I’ll go over eight “Essentials” and present some convincing research about what enriches life.

STEP 1

ESSENTIALIZE

What inflates life?

Which is more valuable: money or time?

How does pistachio shrapnel fit into the picture?

(What the hell is pistachio shrapnel, anyway?)

On this journey together, our ultimate goal is to create time wealth, financial security, and Ignite what's most important. To get there, the first step is to "Essentialize." This means to inject into our lifestyles the essential ingredients that make life delicious.

Nicholas Epley, a Behavioral Science professor at the University of Chicago, says happiness is not a permanent state. Epley compares happiness to a leaky tire. We have to pump air into a tire from time to time to keep it inflated. Similarly, we need to regularly infuse our lives with the ingredients that elate and enrich.



Chapter 2 introduces the eight Essentials and explains how they enrich. In this chapter, we also consider a childhood education, take a personal inventory, and address a ubiquitous pain point among professionals—the time vs. money conundrum.