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FOLLOW YOUR HEART

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Finding Purpose in
Your Life and Work



written and illustrated by
ANDREW MATTHEWS

published in 23 languages!

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FOLLOW YOUR HEART
written and illustrated by
Andrew Matthews

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Also by the same author

“BEING HAPPY!”

“BEING A HAPPY TEENAGER”

“MAKING FRIENDS”

“HAPPINESS IN A NUTSHELL”

“HAPPINESS NOW”

IN MEMORY

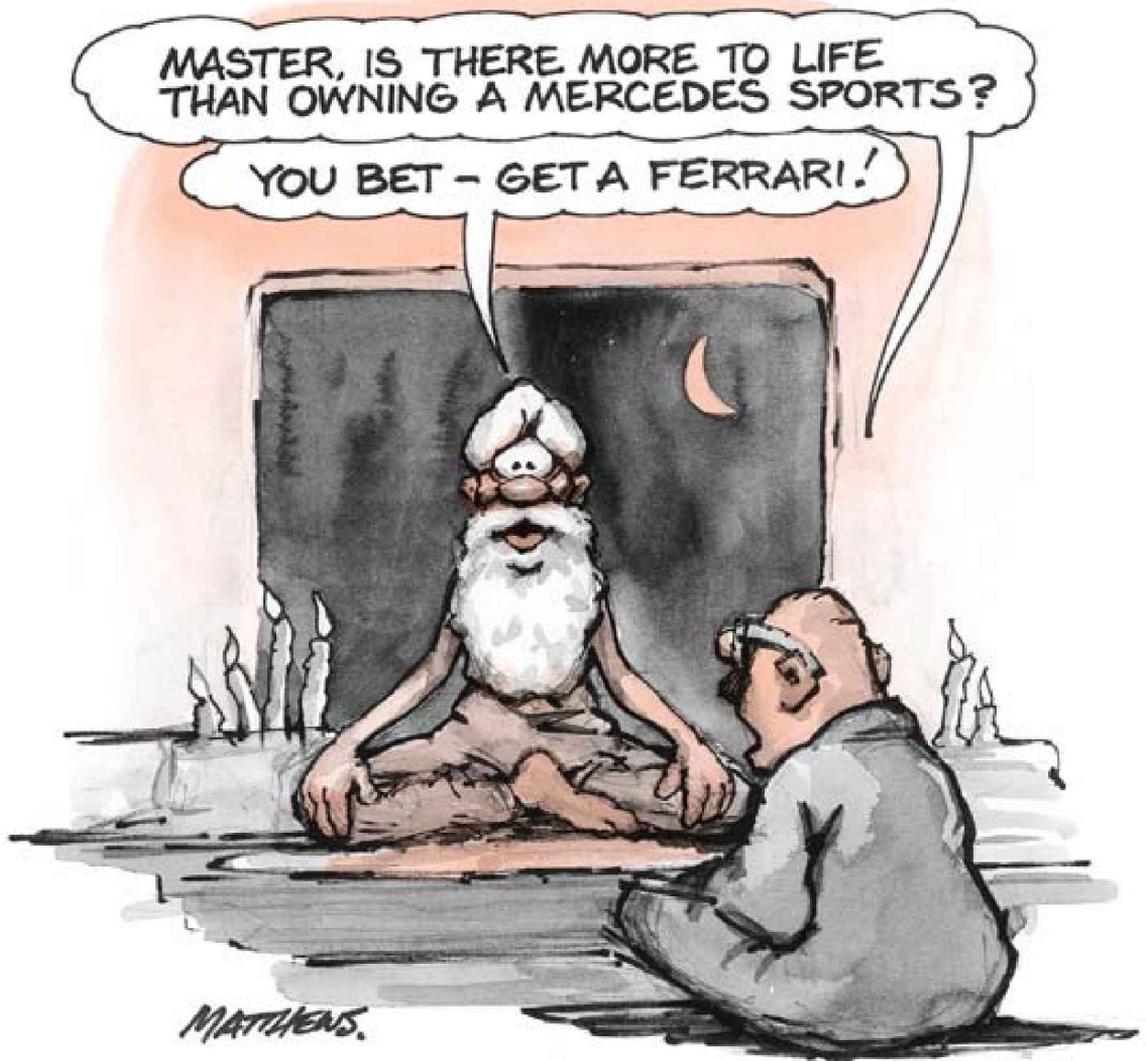
of my father Peter,
who was living proof that you can
follow your heart and have a ball.

DEDICATED

to my precious wife Julie.
Thank you for your endless guidance and support,
and for the joy you bring.

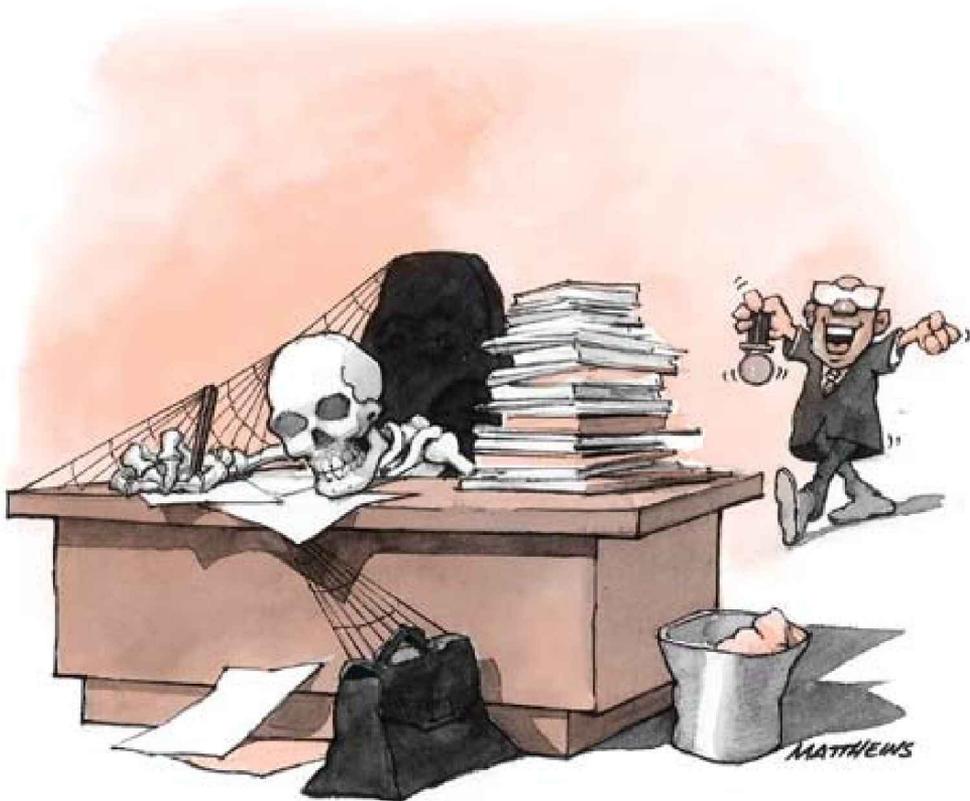
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"The company has decided to recognize your contribution!"

Follow Your Heart

THE TEN CONCEPTS:

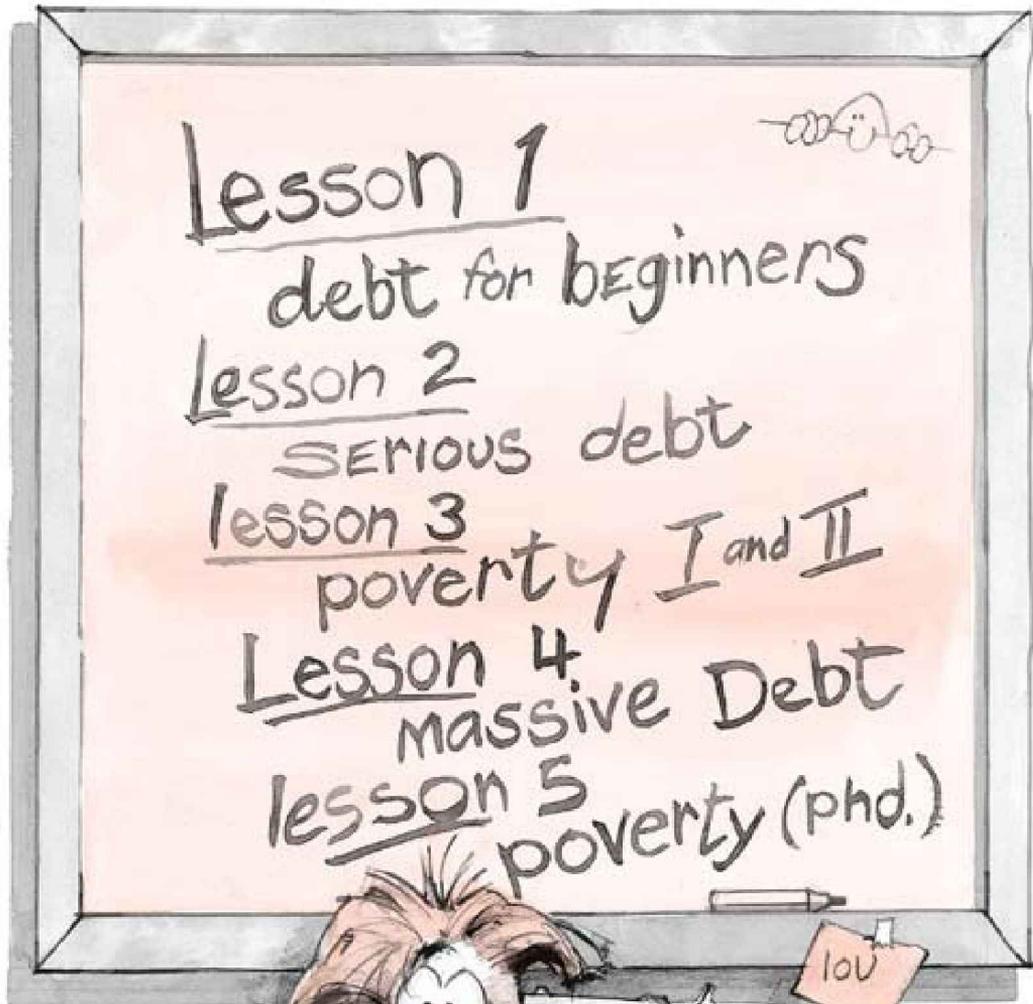
1. We are here to learn lessons,
and the world is our teacher.
2. The universe has no favorites.
3. Your life is a perfect reflection of your beliefs.
4. The moment you get too attached to
things, people, money... you screw it up.
5. What you focus on in life expands.
6. Follow your heart!
7. God is never going to come down from
a cloud and say, "You now have permission
to be successful!"
8. When you fight life, life always wins.
9. How do you love people? Just accept them.
10. Our mission in life is not to change the
world – our mission is to change ourselves.



1

**WE ARE HERE
TO LEARN LESSONS,
AND THE WORLD IS
OUR TEACHER.**

***When we fail to learn a lesson,
we get to take it again... and again!
Once we have learned the lesson,
we move on to the next one.
(And we never run out of lessons!)***



ANDREW MATTHEWS

WHY DO I NEED DISASTERS? LESSONS LIVING AND LEARNING

1

Something can be staring you in the face...

When I was ten, my most prized possession was my football – I ate with it, slept with it and I polished it weekly... instead of my shoes. I knew all about football – but on some other things, like where babies came from, I was a little hazy.

One afternoon I was playing in the street and I lost my precious ball. I looked everywhere. I figured someone had stolen it.

Eventually I spotted a woman who seemed to be hiding it under her jacket. So I marched up and asked her: “What do you think you’re doing with my football stuck up your shirt?”

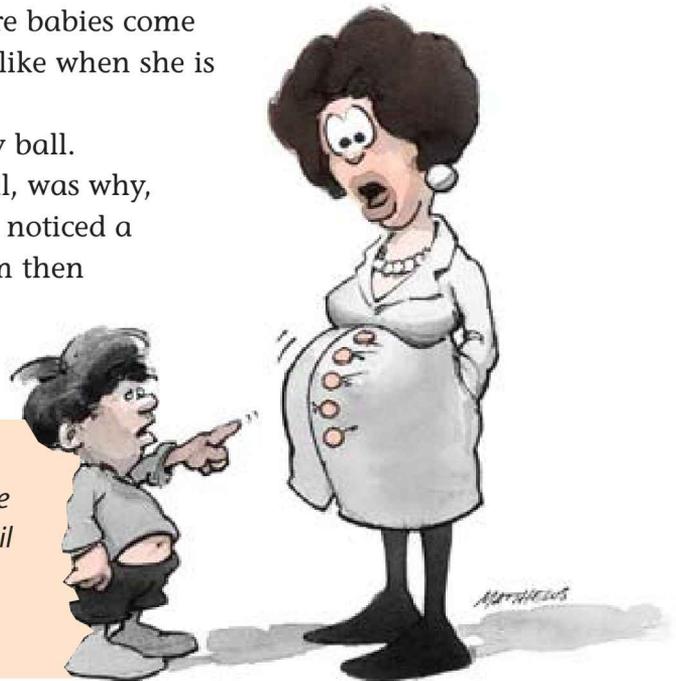
It turned out that she didn’t have my football... but that afternoon I learned where babies come from – and what a woman looks like when she is nine months pregnant.

Later that day, I also found my ball.

What fascinated me most of all, was why, before the age of ten, I had never noticed a pregnant woman... and why, from then onward, I seemed to be surrounded by them.

IN A NUTSHELL

We reach points in our life when we are ready for new information. Until then, something can be staring us in the face but we don't see it.





Why do I need disasters?

The only time most of us ever learn anything is when we get hit over the back of the head! Why? Because it's easier not to change. So we keep doing what we're doing until we hit a brick wall.

Take our health for example. When do we change diets and start exercising? When our body is falling apart – when the doctor says: “If you don't change your lifestyle, you'll kill yourself!” Suddenly we're motivated!

In relationships – when do we usually tell each other how much we care? When the marriage is falling apart, when the family is falling apart!

In school – when do we finally knuckle down and study? When we're about to fail. In business – when do we try new ideas and make the tough decisions? When we can't pay our bills. When do we finally learn about customer service? After the customers have left!

When do we usually pray? When our life is falling apart! “Dear Lord, I know I haven't spoken to you since the last time the yogurt hit the fan...”

We learn our biggest lessons when things get rough. When have you made the most important decisions in your life? When you were on your knees – after disasters, after knock-backs, when you've been kicked in the head. That's when we say to ourselves: “I'm sick of being broke, sick of being kicked around. I'm tired of being mediocre. I'm going to do something.” Success we celebrate – but we don't learn too much. Failure hurts – and that's when we get educated. In retrospect, we usually notice “disasters” were turning points.

Effective people don't go looking for problems, but when they get smacked in the mouth, they ask themselves: “*How do I need to change what I'm thinking and what I'm doing? How can I be better than I am now?*” Losers ignore all the warning signs. When the roof falls in, they ask: “*Why does everything happen to me?*”

We are creatures of habit. We keep doing what we are doing until we are forced to change.

Mary gets dumped by boyfriend Al. Devastated, she locks herself in her bedroom for a week. Then gradually she starts to call old friends and meet

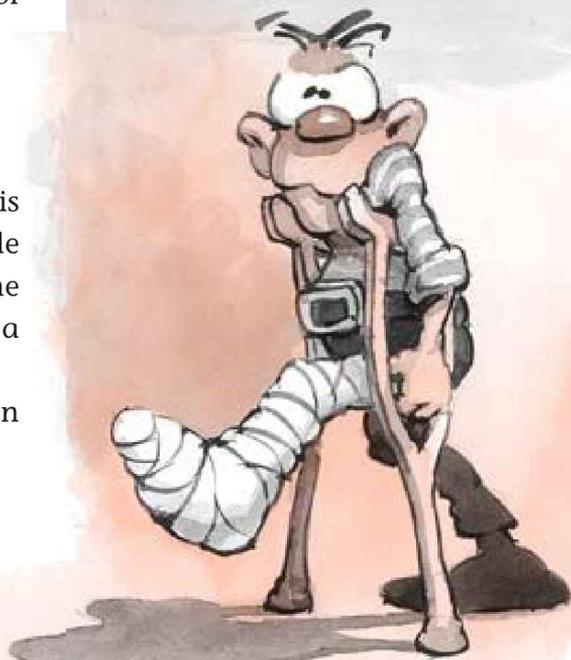
new ones. She soon moves house and changes jobs. Within six months she is happier and more confident than she has ever been in her life. She looks back on the “disaster” of losing Al as the best thing that ever happened to her.

Fred gets the sack. Unable to find work, he starts his own little business. For the first time in his life he is his own boss, and doing what he really wants to do. He still has his problems, but his life has new meaning and excitement – and all out of apparent disaster.

SO IS LIFE A SERIES OF PAINFUL DISASTERS?

Not necessarily. The universe is always nudging us with gentle signals. When we ignore the signals, it nudges us with a sledgehammer.

Growth is most painful when we resist it.



ANDREW MATTHEWS



Lessons

Some things are beyond our understanding... when a child is born with AIDS, when a young mother is gunned down in a hold up, when a whole village is wiped out by flood, we are left asking: "Why?" For these things there seem to be no answers. But on a different level – on the "everyday life level" – we can find some clues.

Have you ever noticed that certain things happen to certain people? Louise gets fired about every six months, Frank seems to get sued every year, Jim gets food poisoning on vacation.

Certain things *don't* seem to happen to certain people. Jim never gets fired, Louise never goes to court and Frank doesn't send postcards from hospital.

Particular people get particular lessons. We can react to all of this in one of three ways. We either say:

- **"My life is a series of lessons I need, happening in perfect order."**
(The healthiest approach, guarantees maximum peace of mind.)
- **"Life is a lottery, but I make the most of whatever comes along."**
(The next best option – offers average quality of life.)
- **"Why do bad things always happen to me?"**
(Guarantees maximum misery and frustration.)

We are continually being presented with lessons. *Unless we learn the lessons, we get to take them again... and again... and again.*

Call it a divine plan, call it the natural unfolding of events, it is happening. Like it or hate it, it is happening. Take responsibility or claim you're a victim, fight it or ignore it, it's happening. It has been happening all your life. Every time your neighbour abused you, each time a salesman ripped you off or a lover walked out on you, there was a lesson staring you in the face.

If we are miserable seven days a week, it's likely we've missed a lesson. When we keep losing jobs, lovers, money... it's a sign that we haven't been paying attention. As one lady remarked: *"I keep getting the same old problems in a different pair of trousers!"*

The worst thing we can ever say is: *"It's not fair!"*



IN A NUTSHELL

We are not here to be **punished**. We are here to be **educated**. Every event has the potential to transform us, and disasters have the greatest potential to change our thinking. **ACT AS IF EVERY EVENT HAS A PURPOSE, AND YOUR LIFE WILL HAVE PURPOSE.** Figure out why you needed an experience, conquer it, and you won't need it again.

I could do anything but that!

We usually want to postpone our most important lessons. We might look at our rocky relationship with our mother and say: "After all the nasty things she has said, I could do *anything* but love her." Right! You probably *could* do almost anything but that right now. That is why it is your lesson. Growth is about breaking new ground!

MY EX HUSBAND IS A PAIN IN THE BUTT!

Divorcing someone doesn't mean our class with them is over. If the marriage is finished, but we're still blaming them for our misery and our mortgage, we are still hooked to them! We remain linked because there is more to learn.

You say: "But the guy is a turkey! I could do *anything*, but forgive him!" Forgiving him probably *would* be the hardest thing – and it's probably something you are not good at – so you are getting a chance to practise it. You can postpone the class, but if you want your life (and your health) to improve, you'll have to take it sometime. While we believe that someone is ruining our life, that belief will make it true for us. It might seem like *they* are in the way of our happiness. Actually it's us in the way – because we choose how we see people.

MY BOSS IS A CREEP. IT'S NOT MY FAULT – HE NEEDS TO STOP BEING A CREEP! (SO WHAT'S MY LESSON?)

While you remain convinced that your boss is a certified creep, he'll be a creep. And it's OK to think he's a creep. At the point you choose to change – e.g. focus on his good points, stop judging him, even empathize a little – the problem will evaporate.



How, you say? There are a thousand possibilities... a) he may respond to your change of attitude and begin to open up, b) he may be transferred to another department, c) you may get another job, d) he may get another job, e) you may get to like the guy. (Really!) How often do we befriend people who, initially, we couldn't tolerate?

When you change, your situation changes. It is law. You don't have to figure out how it will happen. Your transformation alters your circumstance. But your change must be genuine. You say: "I'll put up with Fred but I still know he's a jerk!" But that isn't a major transformation on your part!

How long will it take? As long as it takes you to change.

Why don't I just leave this job now? You can do that. But chances are you'll find yourself working for another creep – it's all part of the great cosmic curriculum!

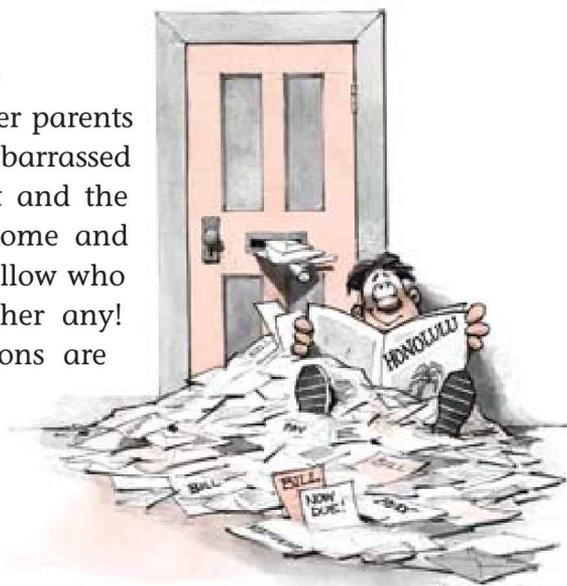
Maybe if I go to a new city, I can make a new start

Wrong! *Usually, the best place to make a new start is where you are!* Take Fred, who owes money to half the neighborhood. Fred says to himself: "Maybe I need to move!" But when he moves, he'll take his thoughts and habit patterns with him – and they are what shape his life. Fred changes cities and attracts the same situations, and another bunch of angry creditors.

If you are a spendthrift, and you migrate to Argentina, you'll still be a spendthrift. The best advice to Fred: "*Before changing your address, consider changing your thinking!*"

LESSONS CHASE US AROUND THE WORLD

In Jill's family, money was a dirty word. Her parents weren't especially short of it, but she was embarrassed to ask for it, they didn't want to share it and the whole family argued about it. She left home and went to live in Barcelona and married a fellow who makes plenty of money but won't give her any! When you step off the plane, your lessons are there to greet you!



IF ONLY I COULD GO TO TIBET,
MAYBE I COULD FIND THE MEANING OF LIFE...

Some of us get grand ideas about travelling to distant lands to find the meaning of life... Jim treks off to the Himalayas. One day, while sitting on a dusty street corner, racked with diarrhoea and dreaming of a warm bath, he has a blinding flash: "Maybe I can 'do enlightenment' at the Ritz Carlton!"

It sounds romantic finding the meaning of life in Tibet, but enlightenment in Tibet is for Tibetans! The meaning of life for most of us is probably in the suburbs.

Lessons we fear

The only way to beat fear is to face it. Because we are always attracting the learning experiences we need, we often attract the experiences that we fear.

Therefore, if you are scared witless of being in debt, chances are you'll get to find out all about it. If you fear loneliness, you'll attract that. If you fear embarrassment, you'll fall on your face. It's life's way of encouraging us to grow.

IN A NUTSHELL

We are each a cause. Our thoughts attract and create circumstances. As we change, we attract different circumstances. Until we learn a lesson about debt, or work, or lovers we either, (a) stay stuck on the same lesson, or (b) keep getting the same lesson in different packages.

Life goes like this. We get hit by little pebbles – as a kind of warning. When we ignore the pebbles, we get hit by a brick. Ignore the brick and we get wiped out by a boulder. If we're honest, we can see where we have ignored the warning signs. And then we have the nerve to say: "Why me?"

