

The Cheat Sheet, I Can Share After Decades of Figuring Things Out

by Malka Ceh, PhD, MSc, c(N)PA

I have always been an obsessive-compulsive truth seeker, addicted to the consumption of massive amounts of information to figure out how things work. Over time, the inquiry has yielded a few shifts in understanding that have considerably improved my existence. I want to share this collection with you.

1. You can choose how you feel. Not always, but much more often than you take advantage of it. Feelings, especially moods, do not just happen to you. To a degree, you can regulate them, and the best part is, with time, you get better at it. Book: The Art of Happiness by Howard C. Cutler and Lhamo Thondup.

2. Responsibility renders control. If you avoid responsibility by offloading it onto other people, systems, or deities, you surrender your control. By taking on responsibility, you are gaining leverage over your reality. Control is the direct upside of ownership. Book: Choice Theory by William Glasser

3. Well-being is a mindset, not a result of your external circumstances. Happiness isn't a consequence of arranging your life perfectly. It is a cognitive framework you apply to the reality you already inhabit. Book: The Happiness Hypothesis by Jonathan Haidt

4. You are a gene vehicle, and your life has no inherent higher meaning. You are a biological machine built by your genes solely to transport and replicate themselves into the next generation. Beyond that transmission, there is no predetermined purpose of your existence. You need to create it for yourself. Book: The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins

5. Your mind is designed exclusively to facilitate gene transmission, not your subjective well-being. Your emotions, cognition, and behavior evolved to keep your ancestors alive and reproducing, not to make you feel good. Good and bad feelings are simply your genes' carrots and sticks, manipulating you into acting in their reproductive interests. To prioritize your subjective well-being, you have to actively redesign the biological cascade: circumstance > feeling > acting on the circumstance. Book: Good Reasons for Bad Feelings by Randolph M. Nesse

6. The majority of what you think you need in life is just virtue signaling. Virtue signaling is an evolutionary strategy you unconsciously deploy to broadcast your reproductive value to others. Your manicured nails, your expensive car, your charitable donations, and your hobbies may make you feel good, but they are your genes' carrots, motivating you to compete for mates. Book: Virtue Signaling by Geoffrey Miller

7. Freedom is achieved by changing what you want or changing what you have. You have two levers to close the gap between reality and desire: the internal work of managing what you want, or the external work of acquiring what you lack. Use both. Source: Getting older and wiser. 🧐