

Welcome to GhettoZen.

Learning about GhettoZen can bring more awareness, presence, tranquility and relaxation into your everyday experience. No tools or equipment required. This is not a rule book. There is no implied order, or proscribed combination of these ideas. This is just a collection of ideas that work for me, so have a read and then pick and choose the ideas you want to try out. Combine as you like, or invent new ones. It is a work in progress. I am certainly not perfect in applying these to my everyday life. But I can attest that I have tried them all in the past 30 years, and I know they brought me a step further on my journey towards a more mindful day.

1ST HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Do something new every day. Every day, when you wake up, decide on a new thing you will do today, something that you have never done before. It does not have to be a big thing. It's easy. For example, look at a different place in your room to pick out an object for contemplation. Take new route to work, or make a random stop on the way. Wear something new. Focus on a part of your body, like your left ear lobe, or the fingernail of the pinky of your left hand. Do it consciously. Just observe. Use the tip of your left elbow to write your first name in the air. Be creative. Be aware. Breathe. Change it up. By thinking about what's new in your experience, you automatically go "Meta", or above and beyond thinking. Because you are thinking about your thoughts, you realize you are NOT your thoughts, and that's an important step in GhettoZen.

2ND HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Take a mind vacation. Whenever you feel the avalanche of daily routines, tasks, objectives, goals, obligations and requirements is about to crash over you, take a mind vacation. Simply take a 2 minute-time out. Find a place where you can be by yourself. Sit comfortably. Breathe consciously. In your mind, travel to your favorite place in the world. Take only what you need with you. Be there. Bring back all the memories. "Stay" in your favorite spot as long as you can. Observe everything. Is there wind blowing? Who is with you? Is that coffee shop still serving the chocolate cheese cake? What music is playing. When you're ready to leave, take another deep breath, and go back to your chores. Taking these mind vacations will train your mind to become more aware of the connectedness of your experiences. It will also reinforce good memories, as the intention you take into your memory palace will change the layout and furniture in the memory palace.

3RD HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Shut up. I know it sounds harsh. But I mean it. "Shut up!". What I mean by this is: Find a moment in your day where you are just about to say something and ...: Shut up. Don't say it. Swallow your words. Think about it some more. See what happens. Maybe write it down instead? Let the other person speak. Check your body language instead. Raised an eyebrow, maybe? Did you shrug? Did you smile? Or was that a smug grin? Did you keep on your poker face? Try out what it feels like when your loud speaker is disconnected. Remember: You cannot NOT communicate. Even without uttering a word, you speak volumes when you are with other people. Could you say what you wanted to say 30 seconds ago any better? Does it have to be said any longer? What is your body saying now? Did silence speak?

4TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Thank someone. Make a decision to thank someone today. Yes, this is something one should do all the time. But one tends to forget. Today, make a point of it. Pick someone that you usually take for granted. Maybe the check-out person in the Super Market? Maybe the reception person at work, maybe the staff from the janitorial service company that come by to water the flowers in your office. Boss, colleague, partner, sibling, child, stranger, .. it does not matter who. Make eye contact, smile, and say “thank you” for something that makes sense in the context. You’ll think of something. Enjoy the reaction. Look forward to what that feels like in terms of awareness, presence and tranquility. You might even have a little Satori-moment of enlightenment, who knows?

5TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Smile. Seriously. Work on your smile. Of course, we smile all the time. Not so much, though, when we are stressed out or angry. The point of this hack is: There are dozens of muscles and nerves involved when you are smiling. The body is a two-way street, an infinite feedback loop. We smile when we are happy, but we also become happy when we smile. The body reacts to the smile muscles being used, and sends out “happy-happy -joy” chemistry signals. It works. Try it out. Find a quiet space, maybe in the mornings, during your bathroom routine, and smile as loudly as you can. Smile until it hurts your face. Enjoy the effect.

6TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Give something away. Our minds are under the strict authoritarian rule of an instinct called Loss Aversion. We just hate to lose stuff we own. And, therefore, we gather more and more stuff we do not need. Every “thing” we own adds a bit of weight, takes away from the lightness of being. Remember, we are human beings, not human “havings”. Every object we appropriate, we have to store, maintain, clean, protect, etc. Making a conscious choice to give something up can lighten our load a little bit. Giving things up is actually quite an underrated path to “enlightenment”. Think of someone that wants to climb Mount Everest. They can only afford to take what they absolutely need. Too much weight will slow them down. Not bringing enough stuff with them might cause them to fail. The trick is knowing how to determine the “right” number and quality of things. So, today, pick something you are ready to give away. Throw it out. Give it as a gift. Sell it. Give it up.

7TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Don’t do that thing. In the morning, before your day manages to “kidnap” you and throws you into your inner whirlpool of actions and obligations, make a mental list of all the things you think you have to do. Then add all the things that you would really like to do. You can write the list down, or just mentally go through it. Once you’re done making the list, pick one thing from the “have to do” list and decide not to do that thing today. Maybe do it later. Maybe tomorrow? Maybe you don’t have to do it at all? Can someone else do it? Can it be combined with other things into a project? That gap in your list you just created just might give you the space and time to do what you really like to do. Something you are passionate about. Something you should do every day maybe? Get into the habit of letting things go. Get in the habit at looking into your judgement of what’s important. Get into the habit of checking in who or what is driving your hamster wheel. Get into the habit of jumping out of the hamster wheel of “Have to Do”.

8TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Stretch. Many of us are working in jobs that require us to remain in the same posture for a long time. Sitting at a desk. Standing behind a counter. Driving a vehicle. Bending over a work bench. Typically, our bodies don't do very well with that, and one of the most detrimental consequences is that our muscles and tendons are not stretched out enough. Everything becomes shorter, more crouched, more bent in on itself. Tension builds up. Muscles become stiff. Nutrition cannot reach into all parts of the body. We get tired. All kinds of negative effects start piling up. That's why so many people swear by sports, or yoga, or any other practice that involves stretching. Not everyone has the time for sports, or regular yoga. In GhettoZen, you can use any free minute to put in a stretch, to "open up", and become aware of your posture. There is no specific technique recommended. Talk to a physical therapist, personal trainer, yoga guru, doctor and pick out a simple stretching routine you will use every day. Whenever you have a gap between activities, do a bit of stretching. Be careful. Breathe into the stretch. Don't overdo it. Do nothing that hurts. Enjoy the feeling of "opening up". Do it often: three times 2 minutes every day is a great start.

9TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Take a mini walk. Whenever the walls are closing in on you, when you are feeling overwhelmed or tired, take a mini walk. It's simple. It does not have to be a long walk at all. It can be done in as little as 1 minute, or it can take 1 hour if you like, depending on how much time you have, how fit you are, whether you have any aches and pains, etc. The point is. Stop what you are doing. Maybe you set 3 alarms each day to remind you that it's time for a mini walk. Stand up. Stretch a bit (see 8th hack). Say to yourself: "Chris is now going for a walk". Then go. Maybe find someone that wants to come along. Do it often. Even if it is just walking from the living room to the kitchen. It's still a walk. Take your steps consciously. Arrive consciously. Return consciously. If there is not time whatsoever, or no opportunity to leave the workplace, take a mind walk, or flex and tense your feet. (see 2nd hack). The point of the mini walks is: We did not evolve to stay in the same position all day long. We are naturally born walkers. Our senses come alive when we walk. When we walk, we receive an automatic foot massage through the contact with the ground. We get grounded. New ideas emerge. We have yet another chance to Go Meta (see hack #31) and go beyond thinking into a space of awareness.

10TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Hold your breath. When you have a minute, find a quiet space, sit comfortably, take a few conscious breaths and close your eyes. Then take a long, slow breath through your nose. Feel the air filling up your lungs. Feel your chest rising and expanding as the air flows in. Keep inhaling. Don't force it, just let the air fill you to your capacity. When you are "full", just hold it there, imagine how the air has time to go into all the places it can go, even into your finger tips, even into your toes. Don't force it, but hold it for a bit more. Then, very gently and slowly, starting from your fingertips, let the air leave your body. Breathe out, all the way, until you feel you are completely empty. Don't force it too much, though. There should be no discomfort. Imagine how the outflow of air is taking any waste materials with it, giving it back to the world. Imagine that the air that is flowing in, has a healthy "positive" color. Whatever works for you. Imagine that the air that is flowing out, has changed color because it carries resources that your body has used. As an additional idea, if you have a plant positioned near by, imagine how you are giving nutrition to that plant while you are exhaling, while the plant is working to make oxygen for you. This exercise should not take you more than a few minutes, but it can be very useful as a "gap" between stressful tasks. Repeat often. Gently expand the "valley" between inflow and outflow.

11TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Calm your pulse. Your heart beats a hundred thousand times every day. Over the course of a lifetime, it beats more than a thousand million times. How many of our heart beats do we notice? Most people only feel or hear their heart beat under extraordinary circumstances. When we are excited, or out of breath, or at the doctor's office when we are connected to a monitor. In this hack, we take a time out to find and calm our pulse to widen our awareness and presence. The easiest way to find your pulse is by using your first and middle finger and putting it on the artery on the

inward facing side of your wrist. (Check on the internet if you need a picture). We can also find a pulse on the carotid artery on our neck. But we can also feel it, when we put our first finger and thumb together in an “OK” gesture. This will take a few tries, but I am sure you will find your pulse without problems. Once you found it, settle down comfortably, close your eyes and count your heart beats. Once you reach 100, count how many heart beats you are spending on breathing in, and how many heart beats you are spending on breathing out. You should notice your pulse rate coming down, calming yourself at the same time: Note: if your pulse is irregular with skipped beats or strong palpitations, please consult a doctor as soon as you can. While not necessarily threatening, a doctor should assess the underlying causes of an irregular heartbeat. Calming your pulse is a very effective exercise to de-stress as your attention turns inward. You are connecting to your breathing. Most of the time, you will find yourself closing your eyes. Your sensory field will expand and you have a chance to go Meta (See hack 31).

12TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Hum. When you have a private moment, for example after getting up in the morning, or before bed time, put yourself in a comfortable position and take a number of conscious breaths. Then, as you breathe out, try to use the outflow or air to hum a soft, low note. Try to hit the lowest note you can produce. You can use the word “hum” to produce the sound. Feel the vibrations as you breathe out. Notice how your exhale process changes into a more steady approach. Some people use the sound “ommm”, but you don’t have to. This hack is useful to relax your vocal chords after a day of talking. It also helps you exhale more deeply, as you try to hold the note longer, and more deeply. It is also useful, because it compels you to find a private space and a time-out moment. After all, people in the office might look at you sideways if you do this during a conference call. If you enjoy this hack, maybe take some singing lessons? Join a choir? Start a rock band?

13TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Clean something. We live in a breathless world. We are constantly bombarded with information, constantly compelled into action. Constantly jumping from task to task. This can wear us down, but it also puts a strain on our environment. Things get cluttered. Things get scraped, and scratched and dirty. As a counterbalance, it has long been a tradition in Zen to clean. Cleaning has deep meditative aspects, as we are taking things away that don’t belong, and bring a thing back to its essence. It does not matter what you clean. You can clean your kitchen, your keyboard, your guitar, your shoes. You can clean your car, you can clean your face. Set time aside, focus on the singular task of bringing your object of attention into a clean state. Do nothing else. Finish the job. Create a gap before you do the next thing. Clean something every day.

14TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Write a diary entry. When our mind goes into overdrive, which is the norm in our Western “civilization”, we tend to lose control of our internal “Mind Radio” which keeps on broadcasting opinions and evaluations and recommendations. One way to hit the “off button” of the Mind Radio is to use hack 14. Write a diary entry. This does not mean that you have to do this every day. You can just choose to take a time out from your mental hamster wheel, get a writing implement and decide to write down how your day has been so far. What happened? How did you feel? What did you do about it? What are you going to do next? The more arcane the diary tool is the better. Don’t type it into your I-Phone if you can. Take out the best pen you have. Take out the best paper note book you can find and write a few careful lines. Ideally, you write this with an ancient feather, some real ink and on unbleached paper. I even bought a new fountain pen for this, and I enjoy using it. Once you have written the entry, you can decide to keep it, tear it up, or read it to someone. But it is something you have created, it’s uniquely yours, it’s one of a kind, completely in the moment; and it has taken you out of the hamster wheel.

15TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Prepare a meal. Another core tradition of Zen, next to sitting meditation and cleaning, is the preparation of food. In our space age society, food preparation has become something of an odd thing. Either we don't do it at all (aka fast food and restaurant food) where we just gobble up as many calories in as short a time as comfortably as possible, or we are compelled to become part of the "foodie" wave, where we have to fit in with the latest dietary, immunological and nutritional trends, conjuring up a raw, vegan, gluten-free avocado, quinoa quiche to elicit cheers from the dietary fashion brigade. The middle ground, just making some tasty, simple fresh food, has begun to lose its place. Therefore, to take a time out, it's a good idea to bring back the Zen tradition of meditative food making. It does not have to be complicated. It can be as simple as making a sandwich. What's important it not what you are making, but that you are making it. That you focus. That you are setting time aside, and that you are doing the job completely, including clean-up of all the tools and dishes used. And that you set time aside to slowly, deliberately and consciously consume the food. Preferably with a friend or family. Preferably in silence.

16TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Wash or peel a fruit. As a corollary to hack 15, preparing food, we can go a simpler route of food preparation: Washing or peeling a fruit. This is a typical GhettoZen hack. Use what you have. If you have an apple, and you don't like the peel, peel it slowly and deliberately. Note, though, that most of the good stuff in an apple is hiding in the peel. So maybe it's better to wash it instead. It's always good to have some fruit around. When you are getting flooded by action items, tasks and demands, find some fruit. Take a careful look at it, notice the smell. Take a time out. Enjoy. Be grateful. Share if you can. Consuming a fruit is a good meditation as it reminds us of our interdependency with nature. It reminds us of taking time to enjoy the fruits of our work. It reminds us that things can be simple. Make sure you take a fruit to work. An apple a day keeps the Zen awake.

17TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Eat a raisin. As a further corollary to hack 15 and 16 (preparing a meal, washing or peeling a fruit) we can go to the simplest level and consume a prepared food item. I am using a raisin as an example because it stands for "concentrated goodness". The point is to consume the raisin consciously. Not a handful of raisins. One. If you don't like raisins, you can use a nut. Not a bag of nuts. One. Or one cherry. Or one date. Or a single olive. I am mentioning this hack specifically because of the high risk of overconsumption of prepared foods like raisins or nuts. It's even worse with snack food like chips and pretzels. Try eating just ONE Pringle™ potato chip. Good luck. But as a tool to take a time-out, to become more conscious, more aware, consumption of a single, small prepared item, savoring it as though it were the last thing you would ever eat, is a great GhettoZen exercise.

18TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Pour a glass of water. The ultimate corollary to GhettoZen hacks 15 to 17 (meal, fruit, raisins) is the simplest form of nourishment aside from breathing. Drinking Water. We can go several weeks without food under some circumstances. But we perish rapidly without water. As a simple GhettoZen hack, make pouring of water a ritual. In Japan, there is an elaborate tea ceremony, which can go on for hours, which is just a very sophisticated elaboration of pouring a glass of water. We don't have to go to that length. Here is what we can do, however. Every time we feel thirsty, make a conscious choice to drink only water. For many people, including myself, this is a massive challenge as the temptation to consume yummy sugary drinks is very high. As you go through the GhettoZen experience, try to focus on the task of drinking water. Set time aside to carefully, deliberately pour a glass of water. Drink it slowly and consciously. Allow the water to "seep into" your body with each sip. Together with breathing, this completes the nourishment hacks (Meal, Fruit, Raisins, Water, Air).

19TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Learn a new foreign language word. People tend to develop "tunnel vision". As society compels us to become ever more efficient at what we do, we optimize, we use machines and tools, we cut corners. We learn to only do what's necessary. And, as a common fallacy, many still don't believe in life-long learning, relegating the task of learning back to the days of school and college. As a great hack to counterbalance that tunnel vision, I recommend learning a new foreign language word. Pick a random language. Pick an everyday word like "friend", "weather", or "food". Find out what that word means in the foreign language. Look up how it is written, try to pronounce it well enough. Try to add more languages as you go along. Can you say "friend" in Swahili? It's "Rafiki". Ring a bell? Maybe try a full sentence next? Or learn how to say "friend" in 99 languages? You will see that the process of opening up to a new language opens up your window to the world, it shows new connections, it exposes assumptions, and gets you ready to learn other things as well. It widens the "tunnel" of your vision and allows more light to shine in.

20TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Teach something. Everyone is a master in something. It's usually connected to something that you are passionate about. Some people are great presenters. Other folks are great cooks, musicians, footballers, model builders or poets. There is an obvious connection between a skill and a passion. We are good at something, because we invest time, and we invest time, because we are passionate about it. The third element that is often missing is the "purpose" element. Many people are really good at something but they are looking for purpose for their skill. Teaching is an easy option here. When you are good and passionate about something, you have a great chance to become a great teacher. Pick one of your passions. Find a student that is willing to learn. Tell them everything you know. Be patient. Be present. Prepare your lessons. Expect nothing in return. Enjoy the progress of your student. It's a great experience. Teaching someone that wants to learn from brings you into the "now" like few other things.

21ST HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Be a listening post. At the very essence of Zen (or Tao for that matter), is stillness. This is one of the most difficult states to achieve in our super hectic, breathless world. Our bodies are equipped to take in a dozen “sensations” that constantly deliver new information from the environment or create new impressions that compel us to deliberate or to act. Sounds, images, smells and tastes, temperature, humidity, emotions, pain, hunger, thirst, fears, passions, desires; they are all competing for our attention, and it’s a real challenge to remain still. To remain silent. To not judge, to not take action. GhettoZen hack 21 tries to address that. Here is the process: Set time aside. Find a quiet place. Sit in a comfortable position. Become a listening post. Observe your body and the inflow of impressions. Check all of your 12 sensations. (1) What do you hear? (2) What do you see? (3) Do you feel hot or cold? (4) Is the environment and your throat dry or humid? (5) What emotion do you feel right now? (6) Is there pain anywhere in your body? (7) Are you hungry? (8) Are you thirsty? (9) What smells and tastes do you perceive? (10) What do you fear? (11) What passion burns in you? (12) What do you most desire? It is important that you take this all in, but that you don’t act on it. Don’t judge it as good or bad. Just observe. Be still. Be a listening post.

22ND HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Mono-Task. In our modern times, there is a persistent myth that the most intelligent people can do many things at the same time. Multi-Tasking is a prominent feature of modern computers, and people are being rated on the same scale, being evaluated how many things they can control and manage and accomplish at the same time. Complete and utter madness ensues. We are NOT built for that. Just like there is a limit to the speed of light, there is a limit for how much complexity a human mind can absorb before rapidly losing focus. Here is the GhettoZen hack to address this. Ever only do one thing at a time. Every time you switch from one task to another, do it deliberately and consciously. If you are working on an email, and the phone is ringing, choose which one you want to attend to. Do NOT do both at the same time. I call this Mono-Tasking. This is especially important when you are speaking to someone in person. Totally mono-task on the conversation. Put your phone face down on the table. Turn your chair to face the conversation partner so you are not distracted by your screen activities. Two minutes of mono-tasking conversation can be more valuable than 30 minutes of a half-baked interaction. Mono-Tasking is an essential foundation of GhettoZen.

23RD HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Bring a gift. Every time we have the opportunity to interact with another human in person, we have a fantastic, unique chance to broaden our awareness and consciousness. To optimally prepare for these interactions, to make the most of it, I recommend the GhettoZen hack of always bringing a gift to the interaction. “Wait”, some of you say, “I meet dozens of people every day, how can I have a gift for them every time?”. The answer is that the simplest gift you can bring is your presence. It even sounds like “presents”. Yes, it is a bit of a play on words, but I hope you get the essence. If you cannot bring a real physical gift, bring the minimal gift of your full attention. Bring the additional gift of listening actively and carefully. Bring the gifts of not judging, the gift of not jumping to conclusions, of not “reading their mind”, by assuming that you already know what they want to communicate or achieve. These gifts cost you nothing but focus and they deliver a treasure that will be much appreciated. I think you will notice the difference in how people respond to you.

24TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Get there early. Our lives can be compared to strings of pearls. The pearls are the moments when we meet “in the real” with people and have a chance to expand our awareness and connections with interactions and feedback. Everything else is just string that connects the pearls. The meetings matter. We typically set a start time for these meetings, and we strive to be there on time. Yet, when we look at the real world, especially the crazy corporate world of back-to-back meetings, conference calls and rushed conversations, we see a lot of people arriving late for a meeting, or even not showing up at all. What a wasted opportunity, in the worst case leaving no pearl and all string. How can we fix this for ourselves and avoid the stress of being late, or being unprepared or being unfocused for the meeting? Hack number

24 is focused on taking these meeting very seriously. The hack is called “Get there early” because being there 5 minutes early allows for delays, allows for a bit of a mind vacation (hack #2), lets you review what you know about the parties involved. You will be amazed how much improvement you can achieve with this hack. Since you will want to be early for the next meeting, you will also want to finish early to prepare for the next meeting etc. Treat each meeting like a rare pearl and you will find treasure in that.

25TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Snap out of it. Every morning our mind “kidnaps” us and throws us into the hamster wheel of habits, needs and requirements. We go: “Wheeeee...” and on and on the hamster wheel hums. One tool I have used successfully in the past is a hack I call “Snap out of it”. The hack consists of a visual anchor or flag that can remind me to go Meta (see hack #31). I put the anchor in a place will look at many times during the day. The anchor could be a little red dot you put on your wrist with a sharpie marker. Every time you see the red dot you’ll see “Snap out of it” and maybe this “cue” enables you to take a little break, breathe and take a mental step back. Any visual anchor can do. A little yellow sticky note with the letters S.O.O. I. written on it. **Snap Out Of It.** One of your kid’s toys placed next to your computer screen. Snap out of it. You have to replace the visual cues often, as your mind will get used to it and no longer see it as extraordinary. Set up a new cue every day.

26TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Reach out and listen. As a corollary to hack #24 “Get there early” this GhettoZen hack is related to our interpersonal relationships. In today’s increasingly digital world, we are compelled to digitalize and virtualize everything. Social media frantically pushes sensational information in our faces, polarizing topics into opposing views that elicit strong emotions and drama. We get everything prepackaged in sound bites and headlines and rarely drill down and read the details, let alone hear someone out with all facets of their opinion and world view. This constant polarization into strong opposites drives the illusion of separation, the illusion that everything can be broken down into separate pieces, factions, entities, groups and parties. To counter this fragmentation, separation, polarization and resulting antagonization of factions, GhettoZen hack 26 compels you to “reach out and listen”. Ever so often, when the cacophony of sound bites, headlines and party lines becomes too loud in your head, reach out to someone you know and hear them out. Simply ask: “What do you think about this?” Do not jump into the discussion with your own views. Just ask clarifying questions. “How did you arrive at that view? Can you recommend an article to read? Do you know other people that have that same view?” By carefully and actively listening, you can broaden your tunnel, let in more light, become more aware and you are also bringing the gift of presence.

27TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Create a picture. As a corollary to hack #2 “Take mind vacation”, you can also try to take a mini-vacation right where you are at this moment. Take a time out. Breathe. Look around. Do you see anything interesting? Anything can be interesting. The way your glasses are magnifying that line of text on this piece of paper. The way the light shines through a tiny gap in the blinds to reflect off the edge of the half-filled glass of water. Once you have found something, pick up a pencil and make a quick sketch of it. A doodle. It does not have to be perfect. If you do not like your drawing skills, take out your smart phone and take snap shot. Find the right angle. Take more than one picture. Look at the image as a past “now” frozen in the medium of your choice. In your mind, attach to the image all the sensations (smells, sounds, feelings, ..) you had around that (see hack 21, “be a listening post”). Give the picture a name. Look at it. Be there. Be still.

28TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Talk to Einstein. Einstein is dead, I know. But Einstein is a very well-known character, and almost everyone perceives him as one of the smartest people that ever lived. However, if you don't like Einstein, pick another person that you think is noble and wise, or knowledgeable and insightful. It's your choice to pick anyone, living or dead, famous or unknown; anyone can qualify, from Newton, to Elon Musk, Galileo to Stephen Fry. Once you picked your favorite smart person, make them your "mentor". Find out about them. Build a solid mental image of what they look like, and of some of the things they said. If there are videos, view a few of them. Then, as part of GhettoZen hack 28, use them to have a "mentoring" session with them ever so often. When you are stressed, at a loss, overwhelmed or just confused, and you don't have anyone you can talk to at that time, take a mental journey to your mentor. Talk to Einstein. Take a mind journey and "sit down" with them in a Princeton University coffee shop. Order coffee or tea. Tell them about your problem. Ask them what they would have to say. You will be surprised how well this virtual mentoring works to clear your thoughts. You can pick a different mentor every time, by the way. And you can also replace this with a real mentor any time, but practice makes perfect, and the talk to Einstein hack is free!

29TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Ungoal yourself. Hack number 29 is called "ungoal yourself". It is related to the fact that our modern society compels us to constantly strive for objectives and goals. Achievements, accomplishments, trophies, medals, promotions and titles, ranks and status reports: we are surrounded by it. But imagine again the example of the Mount Everest climber I introduced in hack # 6. His or her goal is to get to the top, but if someone came by in a helicopter to pick them up and bring them to the top, they would vehemently deny the offer. So, the goal is not really to get to the top, then? Maybe the goal is to achieve a readiness, a level of fitness, a level of resolve, a selection of tools and equipment, a level of knowledge that gets you to the top? That's what I mean with "Ungoal yourself". Look at the goals you might have. Are they the right ones? Maybe the activity of preparing for something is as important as getting to the top? The training. The selection of the team. The getting ready. The enduring of hardships. Sometimes the joy comes purely from the preparation, from the engagement in the process. The achievement can actually be a massive let-down once you're there. That's probably why fame and money are no guarantee for happiness. Ungoal yourself. Enjoy the process. Apply yourself completely. Be aware. Be present.

30TH HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Take the long view. Our modern breathless life tends to be myopic. We rarely look out the window, and our noses are rarely more than a few inches from a screen. We become short sighted. And our minds become short sighted too. When it all gets too much, we can use GhettoZen hack #30 to "take the long view". Take a time out. Go to a window that offers the most unobstructed view into the world. If you don't have a window with a long view, find a place with a view. Go there. Settle into a comfortable position and look what's out there. See how far your eyes can see. Breathe into the long view. Now focus back on something close by, the handle on the window, or your finger held in front of your nose. Repeat a few times. This is good for your vision, but it is also very good for your mind. You will realize that there is always a short and a long view of things. You might realize, that from a distance, what you deem so important, urgent and necessary, might be viewed very differently by a different person. Once a year, try to stop at a place that has the longest view and spend some time there. Maybe you can use a number of other GhettoZen hacks there as well?

31ST HACK OF GHETTOZEN

Go “Meta”. Last but not least I come to hack 31 “Go Meta”. I reserved this as the last GhettoZen hack in this edition, since the technique of going “Meta” is included in all of the previously described hacks. What does going “Meta” mean? Meta is the greek word for "after", or "beyond". Meta is a prefix used to indicate a concept which is an abstraction behind another concept, used to complete or add to the latter. In this case, going Meta means going beyond your thinking. Every time we become aware of our thoughts, we go Meta. Every time we hop out of the mental hamster wheel of compulsive, unconscious action, we go Meta. Every time we notice how our internal “Spielberg” is directing our inner world into another drama of assumptions, suspicions and wild guesses, we go Meta. The assumption is that most people are not Meta 99% of the time. We are driven by needs, fears, desires, and we typically are so busy chasing the next action that we have very little time to reflect. But every morning, just after we wake up, we have our first chance to go Meta and take charge of our day. This is the best time for a moment of silence, for the first, deep conscious breath, or for a slow stretch, or for sitting or walking in meditation, or to look out the window. It does not matter what you do to "put a wedge between you and your day", but it will help you be more present all day.

Namaste

Vierkirchen, August 11, 2017