

**Markus Jotzo**

**The Formula for Infinite Pride**



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**Do Things You Cannot Do**

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*For my son Oscar and my daughter Marlene,  
who courageously explore, discover, and  
conquer the world every day.*



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# Foreword: Baloney again!

Two workers are having their lunch break. They open their lunch boxes and take out their sandwiches.

One says to the other, “What? Baloney again!”

The other says, “So tell your wife to put something else on it.”

The first replies, “Huh? I make my own sandwiches every morning...”

When I first heard this joke, my initial chuckle caught in my throat. I couldn't get this idea out of my head for days. I saw in this little gag the tragedy of those who live an average life even though each of them could live the life of their dreams.

“I make my own sandwiches every day.” Exactly. And every day I write my own fate, as do you and indeed all of us. We also write those things in life that we don't like so much, those things that are boring, annoying or frustrating. Everything that you and I do we have done unto ourselves, for everyone is the forger of their own happiness – and their own unhappiness. Our life is nothing more than the sum of all the decisions that we made in the past, and of all the ones we did not make.

If you are adhering to all the normal demands on your time – job, family, friends, leisure activities – and find yourself wondering why your life is not as colorful as it once was, then the answer is simple. You have forgotten that you make your own sandwiches every day and that you choose your own filling – whether you do so consciously or not.

Every day you have a choice of baloney, avocado, tomato, cheese, cream cheese, honey, butter, jam or ham. Or you could go for muesli, that would be an alternative to bread. Or try a fruit salad. In some cultures, they have soup for breakfast. How about rice with vegetables? Or, or, or.

And every day you have the choice to steer your life in a new direction. You choose whether to be happy or sad by consciously directing each day anew or by unconsciously repeating the past and allowing it to become your future routine. However, constantly reproducing the past on a repetitive loop does not make us happy. Why? Because we humans are in constant motion. That which brings us fulfillment changes over time, and we can only be happy when we rearrange our activities according to our desires and needs.

But, in my experience, we usually forget to ask ourselves what it is that makes us happy and content deep down. What is it that brings us inner peace? What conjures a smile onto our face? We might have some quiet notion of what this is, but all too often we say these are the thoughts of dreamers – unrealistic and undoable. And because we do not want to admit we have done so, we make excuses and talk at great length about *why* this or that cannot be done. The most common excuse is, “I can’t do that because...”

I know this from my own behavior, and if you are honest with yourself, then you will recognize it too. With this book, I wish to encourage you to break this pattern. I am calling upon you to do that which you cannot do. I want to show you what could happen in the worst case scenario and why the worst of all is not putting yourself on this path. I want to open your eyes to the happiness that awaits you when starting each day anew.

If you want to be happy, take your heart in your hand. Listen to what your heart says – that is easier said than done – and then open yourself. The path to realizing your heart’s dream can be long and is often strewn with stones. I won’t lie to you by saying that it won’t be difficult. I will, however, promise you that you will begin to enjoy the journey down this long and stony path. Why? Because this journey to your dream does not rob you of energy, it satisfies and soothes your soul.

Essentially, do the things you cannot do!

*Markus Jotzo*

# 1 Step by Step towards Average Happiness

Recently at an event, a guest showed me a WhatsApp message she had just received from a friend.

“Sun, sand, and sea. Lots of love from Hawaii.” Accompanied of course by an image of cocktails, palms, and bright blue skies.

“Huh, I’d like to be there,” she said, and her eyes began to lose focus.

After the break, it was time for my presentation. I went on stage and mentioned the message, asking: “Who among you would like be in Hawaii right now, with sun, sand, and sea?” About half the audience raised their hands. A few merely twitched – that’s those who in my experience never say anything. The rest merely smiled. They probably knew where I was going with this.

“You know what?” I asked them. “Not one of you wants to be in Hawaii. If you WANTED to be in Hawaii, you would have booked your tickets weeks ago, boarded the plane a few days ago, and would be in Hawaii RIGHT NOW. And what did you do? A few weeks ago you decided to come here.”

I added with a wink: “I am thrilled! So many people would rather listen to my presentation than be in Hawaii. I am honored.”

## Where do you want to be?

No, I wasn’t trying to blow my own trumpet. I was making a point: People always do what they want to do. Otherwise, they would have decided to do something else.

You don’t want to be in Hawaii right now either. There is a high probability that you are not reading this book on a beach in Hawaii. You are at home, perhaps, or in the park or on the way to work. You have chosen to be where you are right now. **If the idea of being in Hawaii sounds attractive to you, then that isn’t because you want to be in Hawaii but because you like the idea of being in Hawaii.**

You like this idea because you sense that this can't be all there is. Because this idea of a Hawaiian holiday reminds you of a yearning, one that you have regardless of how much you have achieved in your life, professionally and privately. Hawaii represents a dream, but not a concrete goal. This vague idea and this intangible yearning are the targets of many advertisements showcasing apparent dream destinations or dream activities like diving, sunbathing or sailing at these beautiful locations. We can recognize this kind of dreaming by its hallmark phrases, such as:

- *Really, I should...* or
- *I would also like to...* or
- *I'll do that one day, too...*

Such phrases are indicators of dreams that do not spur us into action. When we say such words, it is clear that they are not going to happen!

**These dreams are dangerous because they are energy vampires.** They let us dream for a short moment, and then we declare ourselves content with this dream. They dangle the appearance of happiness in front of our eyes while at the same time robbing us of the space to think, to grab something, and to do it. The time that you spend with these dreams and stay at this level is time wasted: It brings you not one inch closer to something real that makes you happy.

It becomes dangerous when these dreams leave no more space for those dreams that do have a chance of being realized. Then the vampires will have drunk all of your energy, stealing your ability to act.

But even if you have managed to go beyond the dream of your perfect holiday and have booked it and taken it: This will not make you happy for the rest of your life. It was, I hope, an enjoyable experience, one that you surely earned and that will provide you with fond memories – but it is not THE happiness of your life.

All these things – hang-gliding in the sunny Alps, cocktails on the beach, sailing the Aegean – bring us joy, which certainly belongs to

life and is, therefore, a good thing. But do not fool yourself. **These are not the things upon which you will look back at the end of your life and say: “I am proud I did that.”**

But why did so many hands go up when I asked who wanted to be in Hawaii? Is it because they were all feeling miserable? If I had also asked my seminar participants how they were feeling, 99 percent would have said, “Oh, actually I’m doing quite well.” And that seems to be the truth.

Many of these people have indeed done pretty well in life. They have a good job, a partner, probably kids, a house, a nice car, and so on. But many of them also have a yearning gnawing at their insides.

An old friend from my student days became a banker after graduating and built himself a legendary career. He has a lovely wife, healthy kids, and a large house – he has everything he needs. Recently, we met again after a long absence, and he told me he had written a bucket list – a list of all the things he wanted to do before he kicked the bucket.

“You know what, Markus,” he said, “I have achieved a lot. I should be completely happy. But somehow I don’t feel content.”

What was at the top of his list? A Porsche.

There was once an advertisement from Porsche that featured a small boy marching into a car showroom and staring with wonder at a gleaming sports car. The salesman comes up and says to him, “Hey, do you want to sit inside?” The boy nods with a huge smile and climbs into the driver seat. He sits quietly for a quiet a while, his hands lightly on the steering wheel. Then he climbs back down and says with a firm voice, “Thank you for the test drive. We will meet again in 30 years.”

For my friend, this dream did not appear until he was in his midlife crisis, and I will bet that this feeling that something is missing in his life will not be assuaged by the ownership of a Porsche. I don’t begrudge him his Porsche – he can have two if he wants – but it will bring him no more life happiness than a dream holiday to the Maldives would.

My friend is not unique. He is part of a common phenomenon: People work many years of their life to achieve the things that are commonly understood to be attributes of happiness. They firmly believe that they won't be happy until they have achieved these things.

And when you've done all that, what happens then? At some point, you will discover that these attributes do not give you a deep feeling of happiness. **You have reached a state that I call average happiness.**

Average happiness is characterized by its alignment to values and expectations, specifically measurable values and measurable expectations. Bestsellers like *100 Things to Do Before You Die* or *100 Must-Visit Destinations* speak volumes about how attractive they are.

However, people who have reached average happiness look around themselves and think, "Actually, I have no reason to complain. I am doing pretty well. Why am I not happy?" They sense an intangible yearning. That "actually" is like a rusty nail in their consciousness and it hurts every time they move. They look for ways to numb this pain, and they try many other things that others suggest will make them happy. These things work, but only for a few moments.

How about you? Be honest with yourself: How do you feel when you wake up in the morning? Do you look forward to the tasks and events of the day? Allow me to give you a checklist as a starting point, offering questions with which you can get your happiness status back on track.

**Checklist: "Am I in a state of average happiness?"**

Check all those that apply.

- I often think, "What an awesome job I have!"
- I am really satisfied with the friends I have and the intensity of my contacts with them.
- I am overall satisfied with my relationships and my family.
- I am completely satisfied with my fitness, health, and diet.

- I have a deep sense of contentment with my purpose in life.
- I do everything in my daily life with my whole sense of being.

Result:

- Did you check **less than four** boxes? If so, then you are well-entrenched in average happiness. This is a good realization and this book will show you what you can do to change this.
- Did you check **more than four** boxes, in all honesty? Beyond your checking, do you aim for a high and ambitious goal every day? Congratulations, you are far beyond average happiness! Nevertheless, you should continue to read this book as it contains many exciting ideas for you, too.

## The suction of average happiness

Why so many people first aim for average happiness is a good question. I believe that the basis for this lies in childhood. Think about it for a moment. At which age do we ask children for their opinions? Before we start telling them what to do or not to do, or afterward? And when do children have a voice in deciding where to go on vacation? Or which pet to buy? Or what state their room should be in? Or how they should dress?

I am not saying that there should be no rules and standards for children; these belong to a sense of social competence. Children should, however, learn from an early age that they can go beyond accepted standards as long as they are ready to suffer the consequences. Unfortunately, this is something that few children are taught nowadays. They do not learn to think in possibilities, but rather are instructed to get in line with what others consider to be the boundaries.

For example, as a child, I was fascinated with playing the piano. I would have loved to learn it, but I never told my parents about it. Piano lessons were expensive, and we didn't have much money, so I thought that fulfilling this dream would be an impossibility.

Children are also strongly influenced by what their parents show them. So, what do they hear in the evening from mom or dad?

- Do they hear, “I met with the boss today about that raise – didn’t make it again. It’s just not going to happen.”
- Or do they hear their father or their mother say, “I am doing this training course, and then I can do a more exciting job. I’m so looking forward to it!”

On the other hand, I am not suggesting that anyone should use their parental circumstances as an excuse: This imprinting provides a direction, but no person is obliged or forced to follow it. On the question of how far childhood circumstances determine the life of an adult, there is a wonderful story doing the rounds on the internet. I am not sure if it’s true or just an urban myth, but it certainly contains a grain of truth:

A criminal in the US is on death row. A journalist asks him how he came to be this way. His answer: “You know, my dad and my mom were both alcoholics and they always beat us. We grew up in the ghetto; no one cared whether we went to school or just played around. With all that, I had no choice but to become a criminal.”

The journalist asked, “We? Did you have any siblings?”

“Yeah,” said the criminal, “I had a twin brother, but I lost contact with him long ago.”

The journalist goes and finds the brother. It turns out he is a successful lawyer. When asked how he got to be that way, he answers, “You know, my dad and my mom were both alcoholics and they always beat us. We grew up in the ghetto; no one cared whether we went to school or just played around. With all that, I had no choice but to dedicate my life to ensuring that there is more justice in our society.”

No. How you grew up is not an excuse. But of course, people will follow the examples they are given, and they will also follow celebrities as well as their friends and their goals. Or they will seek advice

and, all too often, will be convinced through sensible argumentation to set aside their plans because they have made themselves dependent on others and external developments instead of grasping the steering wheel with their own two hands. I recently chatted to a friend on the phone, and she said joyfully, “Let’s see what opportunities life offers me.” That sounds so harmless, but what it means is that I must wait to see what happens. I cannot influence anything. **But life offers us precisely those opportunities that we seek.**

Those people are hampered by thoughts of security, which are not only deeply imprinted in the wartime generation. Today we grin when we hear that song *I Want a Cowboy as My Husband*, in which the mother urges her daughter to marry the neighbor’s son because he works on the railways. She can imagine no greater happiness for her daughter than this sense of security. But are we any further than that today?

When I resigned my position at Unilever in 2005 to set up my own business, my parents were skeptical. “Gosh, Markus,” they said with wrinkled brows, “Do you honestly want to give up that regular salary?” And of course, they only wanted what they thought was best for me!

Our language shows how deep the thoughts of scarcity run through our cultural heritage.

“Cobbler, stick to your trade!”

“You can’t have everything in life.”

The constant media lamentation about the unemployment rates and the limits to how much the pie can be shared is, however, a self-fulfilling prophecy. The only effect is that it strengthens how people think about security. When I read these headlines, I suddenly yearn for a more American perspective. The thought that “everything is possible” may seem a bit much, but I believe it is the reason for the success of many Americans as well as many other people across the world. This can be seen in the annual numbers of new businesses

being set up: While the already rather conservative number is decreasing in Germany, it remains healthy in the USA.

However, ensuring security by achieving a permanent position is itself an illusion. Take a look around: Practically all large companies are letting people go. The only way to be certain in the long term is to make yourself independent and take your fortune into your own hands. Then you will have a direct influence on whether you have a successful business or not.

## **Resistance to true happiness**

When you first arrive at average happiness, you will have inside you this unpleasant feeling of discontent. It is an intangible and fleeting feeling, yet one that exists.

Despite this feeling, many will continue as if nothing were the matter; this happens because there are three powerful reasons to leave the situation as it is.

### **Reason #1: Average happiness develops extremely strong attractive forces.**

It's like when you try to separate two large magnets: You need a lot of force. And even if you have managed to separate them by one or two centimeters, they will be trying their utmost to return to each other as soon as you let go.

These forces grow out of the social recognition that accompanies the attributes of average happiness: When you tell your neighbor about your fantastic trip to the Maldives, you will see admiration or envy in their eyes – a reason for you to pat yourself on the shoulder. The same happens when you inform your parents of your new position, endowed with many perks and privileges. Or when the eyes follow you as you cruise down the road in your sports car.

There is no doubt that this external recognition gives us a sense of well-being. So we do everything we can to enjoy more of this

particular feeling as it whispers to us from the outside. But if your well-being is dependent on what others think of you, then you have no choice but to arrange yourself to gain the approval of others. Precisely this is the difference between deep, internal satisfaction and this sense of well-being: If it comes from outside, then you must constantly renew it with objects or actions that others consider worthy of their admiration. Deep, internal satisfaction, however, you can only find when you do something that you find admirable.

Conclusion: The fear of losing external admiration will stop you from *not* doing things that others approve. **Those who have chosen to free themselves from average happiness can no longer base their decision making on the expectation of others' enthusiasm. They risk losing this familiar recognition – and that hurts.**

### **Reason #2: The Must.**

At the beginning of this chapter, we looked at the question “Who would like to be in Hawaii right now?” You can probably imagine one of the common replies, “It’s not that I don’t want to be in Hawaii or that I want to be here. I don’t want to be here; I must.”

This words can be found in 1000 different contexts:

- “I *must* work to earn money.”
- “I *must* take this job because I am unemployed.”
- “I *must* take care of my mother, so I can’t take a holiday.”
- “We *must* finish paying off the house first.”
- “I *must* sweep up first.”
- “I *must* finish watching the news.”

Do you know anyone who doesn’t declare “I must do this or that” at least once a week?

**But: No person must do anything!**

At the end of the day, even going to the toilet is not a must. Of course, if we don’t go, we will pay a rather unfortunate price, but we are not *forced* to go.

This “must” is a very dangerous word because by using it you are surrendering your awareness that you make decisions of your own free will. With it, you shift your decisions out of your area of responsibility. With this, you trim your horizon of possibilities – without any need to do so.

### **Reason #3: Staying in your comfort zone is comfortable.**

The familiar. The tried and tested. The well-practiced. When I raise this point in my seminars or coaching sessions, I often hear, “Me? In my comfort zone? If you only knew what I have to go through each day! When the kids are up all night, don’t you think that’s exhausting?” Or: “When my boss tells me to make a presentation at the last minute, and I’m working on it all night.” Or: “I constantly have to deal with my neighbor. If that means I am staying in my comfort zone, then I don’t know anything anymore.”

Nonsense. All of that happens in the comfort zone. In the situations, they are describing all they need to do is what comes with the territory of work, of raising your children, of social contact.

**Stepping out of your comfort zone means something else: It means making decisions that will lead to better results.** It can be hard work; there is no doubt about that. It can make you sweat or make you feel lousy. But it will bring you new results – in contrast to the tasks that come with the territory and that you have already done 100 times.

To depart from average happiness and explore new shores, you free yourself in three ways:

- From the opinions of others
- From your musts
- From your comfort zone

But what are these new shores? What awaits you beyond average happiness?