Love, The Old Man: Potentially Useless Advice

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School and society as a whole want us to believe that, in order to succeed or get what you want, you must assiduously attend to whatever work is put in front of you and otherwise submit to someone else’s course.

That means always doing your homework, putting everything into your job, getting involved in your community however you can . . . the list goes on.

This is a mindset that’s pounded into our heads from the moment we start preschool. You want to go play in the sandbox? Well, Jimmy, you have to learn your ABCs first!

It makes sense too. It’s a productive mentality that keeps society moving forward.

However, by the time you get to high school or college, you might have fallen in love with something outside of your prescribed future.

Rather than go with the typical artist example that everyone has heard until their ears bled, let’s say that you fell in love with banking. You lucky duck, you enjoy something that’s profitable. Good for you!

Society says that you can become a top world banker or hedge fund manager by putting all of your effort into your college classes and getting straight A’s!

Yeah, doesn’t sound quite right, does it?

What you need to do is go out and meet people in the industry, find whatever opportunities you can to work in the field, and otherwise get involved however you can.
Problem is that, by the time you reach our age, your parents, teachers, and pretty much everyone else around you have hardwired your brain to follow the older pattern. At this point, it’s more comfortable and more immediately rewarding to get your straight A’s, or at least that’s how it feels.

My parents have been trying for some time now to undo theirs and society’s twenty-one years of brainwashing in my head. It’s difficult, though, because school is still important, perhaps even vital, in getting your first few jobs or a good graduate program.

So does that mean you should reduce your involvement with the community? That might not be healthy either, as people tend to need human interaction. Furthermore, depending upon what you love, the community might help you achieve your goals. At the same time, though, you still have to work on your own and your friends can’t always help you with that.

The answer is to cut into your free time, right? Not so. There are some people, like CEOs and authors who crank out a book a month, who can spend every waking hour working on one thing or another. However, assuming that you’re human, you’ll need some time to lay back and let your mind take a breather. If you don’t — pow! — there goes a gasket in your head, and you’re either spiraling into depression, having a nervous breakdown, or (best case scenario) constantly exhausted and unhappy with your life.

Then, of course, there’s sleep, but each person needs a different amount to function and teenagers and college students should be getting at least nine hours each night. Cut into that and you should be okay, if you can do so safely. Some people (myself included) crash their cars when they haven’t spent enough time in dreamland.

It comes down to those five things:

- School
- Your Ambition
- Community/Extracurriculars
- Down Time

and

- Sleep

In the end, it’s up to you to find a balance that works for you. Some people are lucky and can spend less time on schoolwork and still get straight A’s, but not everyone can. Others are loners and don’t feel the need to have extracurriculars with other people, but not everyone wants that.

I know, not very helpful advice if I don’t give you a straight answer, right?

I just hope this clarifies things for whoever is still struggling to find that balance, myself included.

Good luck and stay sane!
Song of the Week: “Heathens” by Twenty-One Pilots has absolutely nothing to do with this week’s blog, but it’s been gnawing at my brain for the last two weeks, so here it is! Hope you get infected too.

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