



IMAGE: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

In college, I worked several part-time jobs. About a quarter of my waking moments were spent on these jobs, and in all honesty, often times I wish I didn't have to. Being young and free, I had plenty of other options on how to spend my time—things that were actually fun too, like hanging out with friends, or watching a movie, or going to the beach, or eating Nutella-strawberry crêpes at the local café. I certainly didn't envision spending my youth in the basement of libraries and laboratories, and yet, there I was, 20 hours a week, tired from classes, group projects, assignments and exams, wishing I was out playing in the sun, and yet, steeling myself for another few hours of work before I could go back to the dorm and maybe get some sleep.

All that sacrifice, all that effort, all the mishaps with macro-shrimps and thousands of fish requiring feeding... for what?

For money, naturally.

Money that I then immediately blew on the stupidest things.

Like this pink monstrosity.

At the time, 19-year-old Atiqah thought the hot pink, designer, plastic money box (that reminded her so much of fat Majin Boo from *Dragon Ball Z*) was the funniest thing ever, and she happily handed over a chunk of her hard-earned money to the clerk in the chic boutique in San Francisco, all for a few giggles. A few hours later, she would realise that she actually had no use for it, and not knowing what to do with it, she would

DO YOU KNOW THE PRICE OF YOUR LIFE?

ATIQAH NADIAH ZAILANI

The cycle I mentioned above is unfortunately a very common one, and one that I was stuck in for years and years.

At some level, I vaguely knew my spending habits were out-of-whack and not at all aligned with what I really wanted to do with my money, and in a larger sense, with my life. I mean, I was sure there was a reason why I was working so hard and for so many hours, and I was also pretty sure the reason was not just so I could own a hot pink thing.

put the thing in the back of the closet and forget all about it.

She would then go work some more, wishing she didn't have to, and then use the earnings to go on another impulsive shopping spree, buy a lot of useless things, chuck them away, realise she didn't have anymore money, so she would go work some more, wishing she didn't have to...and the cycle repeated itself over again.

Reading the original book will give you a better understanding, but I will attempt to summarise it here.

Life energy

We all have a certain amount of time allocated to us on this planet. One day you will die—your allocation will be used up. We will call this “Life Energy”: a limited resource you have at your disposal.

Your life energy visualised

When we go to our jobs, or whatever it is we do to earn a living, we are basically trading our Life Energy for money. For a lot of us, work takes up a significant amount of our time, and thus our Life Energy. In return, we get some money that we then spend to make our lives better.

Continued to page 13

MONEY

DO YOU KNOW THE PRICE OF YOUR LIFE?

After page 12

The question you need to ask yourself is this: is what you're spending on worth the amount of Life Energy you've given up for it?

Crunching the numbers

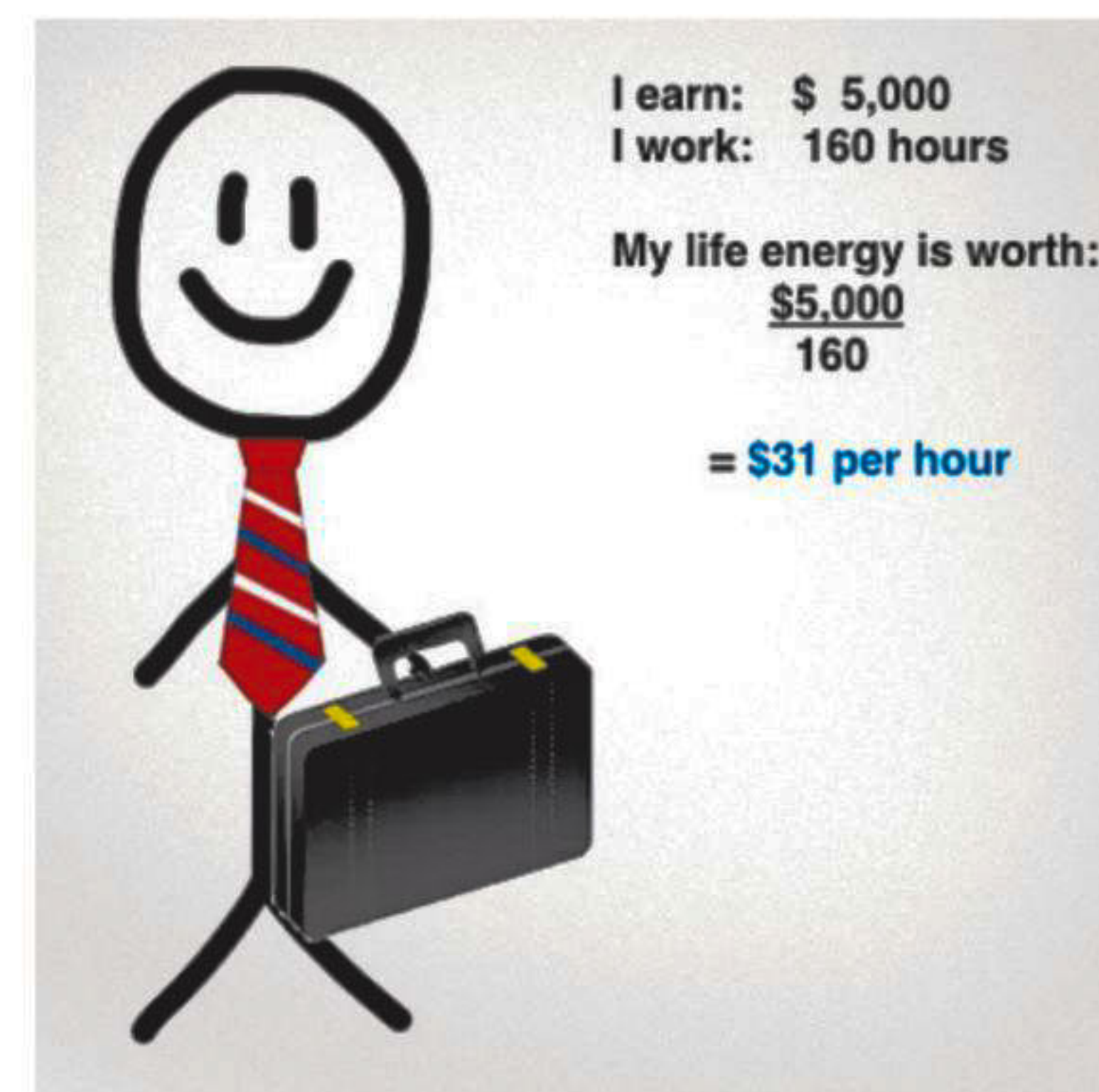
Let's use some of the math skills we learned in school and bring this concept to life. If you hate math, feel free to glaze over the numbers and focus on the point I'm trying to make.

Say I work as an executive, and I earn USD 5,000 a month in exchange for the standard eight-hour workday, five days a week. That's USD 5,000 for 160 hours of my time each month. So theoretically, my time is worth:

$\text{USD } 5,000 \div 160 \text{ hours} = \text{USD } 31/\text{hour}$

However, the picture is incomplete, because it doesn't take into account the additional costs of having a job:

Time spent getting ready to work in



the morning = 0.5 hour/day, or 2.5 hours/week

Time spent stuck in traffic to get to work and get home from work = 3 hours/day, or 15 hours/week

Time spent de-stressing from work by watching TV like a zombie = 1 hour/day, or 5 hours/week

Costumes needed to look acceptable at work = USD 300/month

Vacations or toys needed to escape from work = USD 3,000/year, or USD 250/month

Altogether, I spend an additional 22.5 hours a week, or 90 hours a month, with work-related tasks. Since an hour of my time is worth USD 31, those 90 hours I spend are worth around USD 2,790 a month. The costumes and vacations are another USD 550 a month.

So, out of my salary of USD 5,000 a month, I am actually only truly earning: USD 5,000 – USD 2,790 – USD 550 = USD 1,660

My new and accurate hourly price is now:

$\text{USD } 1,660 \div 160 \text{ hours} = \text{USD } 10/\text{hour}$

This is the price of my Life Energy, a grand USD 10 an hour. For all the work that I do, I am actually making only USD 10 an hour. This is the point where working at McDonald's serving burgers seems more lucrative.

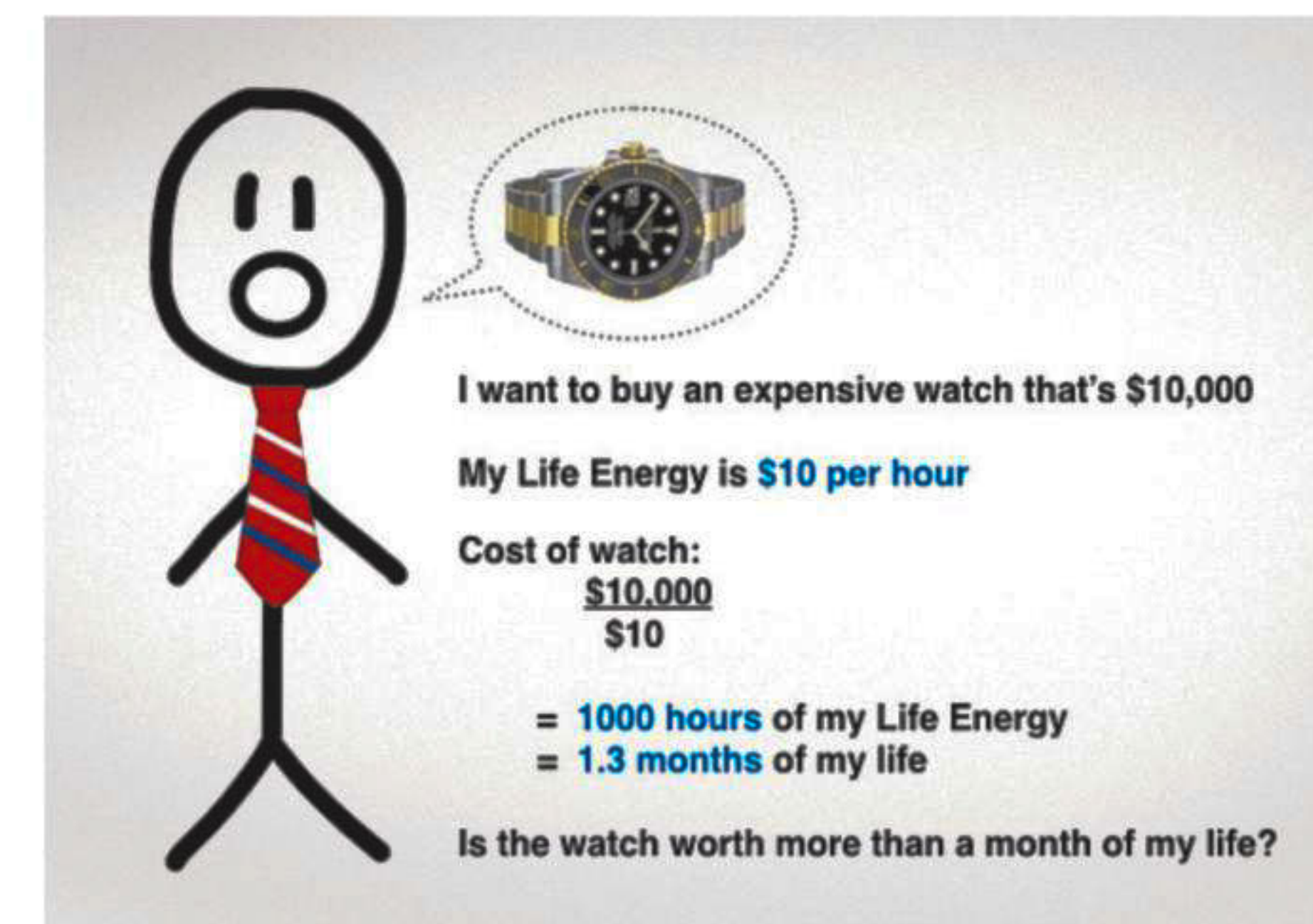
Now what?

What's the point of knowing the price of your Life Energy?

The benefit of knowing the price of your Life Energy is the ability to evaluate what is worth spending it on.

For example, I am thinking of buying an expensive watch worth USD 10,000. Since I know that my Life Energy is worth USD 10 an hour, I can calculate that I am trading 1,000 hours of my Life Energy for it. That's a lot of hours. That's more than a month of my life!

For some of us, 1,000 hours of Life Energy for a nice watch is totally worth it. Because we love and appreciate watches, and because the watch brings us a lot of happiness, we have no issue exchanging that much of our Life Energy for it.



value. You may think I'm crazy, but you don't get to have a say.

So, if you like nice houses or premium cheese, and you deem those worthy of giving up your Life Energy for, then by all means, do so.

However, you may find that you are spending too much of your Life Energy on things you don't actually care about, or that don't even make you all that happy. Maybe, you're paying 200 hours of your Life Energy on rent, but you hardly ever spend time in the house, or you barely even use all that space. Maybe, it's time to downsize so you no longer need to work so hard and for so many hours just to be able to afford it.

Remember...

We all have a limited amount of time to enjoy our lives—maybe 80 years or so, on average. The majority of those years is spent on our jobs. While some of us are lucky enough to enjoy the work we do and find a lot of meaning in it, the rest of us often wish we could do something else with that time and with our Life Energy. But we stay on because we need the money to pay for all the things we buy.

Sometimes, we overcompensate for our unhappiness by buying too much stuff and taking on way too many loans that we think will make us happy, except they don't and are not worth the trouble. But we don't know this, because we've never really been able to measure what we're giving up in exchange for them.

But now that you actually have a way

to measure it using the price of your Life Energy, you can actually evaluate whether the things you spend on are worth the amount of Life Energy you give them.

And if you find that they are not worth it, then stop spending the money. Instead, keep the money. Even better, grow the money.

Things for you to do right now

1. Calculate how much you're getting paid an hour by dividing your monthly salary (plus bonuses, if relevant) by the number of hours you work each month.
2. Tabulate all of the extra costs to holding that job that you wouldn't have to pay for if you didn't have to go to work, e.g. the clothes, the commute, the de-stressors, etc. Subtract that from your salary, and calculate how much you're actually getting paid an hour. That is the price of your Life Energy.
3. Look at all of the things you pay for and calculate how much Life Energy they are costing you. Decide if they are worth it.

If they are worth it, by all means, keep throwing your money at them.

If they are not, then eliminate those expenses and keep the money instead.

Atiqah Nadiah Zailani (<https://atiqahnadiah.wixsite.com>) is a Malaysian professional aspiring for a balanced, sustainable life by living well with less, who solves problems and gets things done for a living.