

ARE YOU ON auto pilot?

If you've been stuck in the same lane for longer than you'd like to admit, make 2016 the year you take back the steering wheel.

The calendar has flipped to a new year, but your life hasn't really caught up yet. When it comes to your career, your boss is stubborn as ever and nothing exciting has come your way. As for your love life, well, that rut is now a major sinkhole. In fact, it feels like you're heading towards a predetermined destination chosen by someone else. If this sounds familiar, then girl, you're definitely flying through life on autopilot.

"Most people are headed in the one direction for most of their life because

they're trying to do everything the 'right' way," explains Dr Dain Heer, author of *Being You, Changing The World*. "They don't realise they really have a choice to go in a different direction. Their level of happiness is almost non-existent. They don't have a sense that they're actually creating their lives."

There is a way to shake it up – you're in control of your own life, after all. With a little bit of planning and positive thinking you can stop settling for 'good enough' and move towards a life you're actually excited about. What are you waiting for?

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ROADBLOCK

YOU'RE ON SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE PATH

Ever find yourself looking around thinking, "How did I wind up here?" Whether it's about the job you're doing just because you're good at it, not because you love it, or the relationship you're still in because everyone else says you're so perfect together, many of our life decisions are based on very early learnings. "Autopilot is based on holding the past in place to create a certain future, not the future you would like to create," explains Heer.

The road most of us are travelling along in each of the realms of career,

money, relationship or happiness is often strongly influenced by our family or friends and their own ideals. "We've never questioned it. We've just lived it and thought 'This is me' because we've been around it for our whole lives," Heer points out to us. "[We think that] our only option is to head in that same direction." Sound familiar?

Heer suggests breaking this pattern by making a list of all the points of view you've picked up from your parents (e.g. you'll make more money if you get a university degree or that getting

married before 30 is important). Then, get real and ask yourself, 'Are these actually true for me?' Keep the ones that you agree with and either scratch the others (got a red pen handy?), or make a commitment to understand where these beliefs come from and to not let them block your true path. "You will start to get the sense that something different is possible," explains Heer. "[This awareness is] how we make changes in the beginning. When you change your points of view, your reality will change as well." ➡





THE ROADBLOCK

YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO YOU

Finishing uni, thinking about your career, falling in love, planning adventures... your twenties are the time to be posing the big questions. Clinical psychologist Philip Johnson (choosingchange.com.au) believes constant questioning is the key to self-knowledge. "The most important thing of all is to know yourself," explains Johnson. "Ask questions, like: Why am I doing this? Why am I feeling this? What is this experience? How is this affecting me? Why am I reacting to these things? Why do I do what I do?"

As Johnson says, you don't want to get to 30, let alone 50 or 60, still feeling stuck.

Heer agrees, adding that asking yourself these questions can prompt you to open up more possibilities in each of the tired situations in your life. It's totally not crazy to have a chat with yourself and ask...

- 1 "How does it get any better than this?" (Ask this when something 'good' or 'bad' happens to you)
- 2 "What's right about this I'm not getting?"
- 3 "What would it take to change this?"
- 4 "What else is possible?"
- 5 "What would it take for this to turn out better than I could have imagined?"
- 6 "What grand and glorious adventures am I going to have today?"



THE ROADBLOCK

FOLLOWING TOO MANY GOALS

"Most of us have been on autopilot forever and are walking around blindly hoping that the next thing will give us what we want, not really having the sense of what we would truly desire," explains Heer. The secret is to drop the goal-setting on its head and start chasing the feeling you're after.

If there were no limitations in your world and you could have anything at all, what would it be? "If you can get an idea of not just the job that you'd like or the relationship, or the sex you want, but the way it'd feel in your world to have that on a daily basis, it will give you a guide to follow for the rest of your life," he says.

Write this feeling down in as much detail as possible and refer back to it often to keep you on track. It might sound like an airy-fairy concept, but calling up that energy can have a powerful impact on your life.

If you're trying to decide between two different jobs, or courses to study, or guys to date, and one feels a lot more like that energy you've written down, choose it. (FYI, We're hoping to feel bod-con vibes like Selena Gomez: the Victoria's Secret show edition). "By doing this, you'll know whether a person or a class will contribute to the life you'd really like to have, before you ever spend any time or money on it," Heer explains. Too easy.

Once you've captured that feeling, be sure to only share your plans with people who will support you (not grill you more than a cheese-pesto toastie). Most of us have one or two people like

that in our lives who will nurture our quest – a Yoda to our Luke Skywalker.

"Find one person who truly has your back, so when you tell them these kinds of things you're excited about, they get excited too," Heer suggests. "Having that person breaks you out of the idea that you can't do this and you're all alone. That one person can be a source of energy and make a contribution to your choice."

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Whether you're clear on what's needed to shake up your life (flights to South America already booked) or you're still musing over options, without funding, your daydreams will remain just that – a dream.

According to Johnson, it's time to start saving. "Whatever you're doing – every job that you have, every day that you get paid – put a percentage of your money aside," he recommends. "You won't be able to follow your dream unless you're financed."

“I CHANGED LANES!”

Two readers spill about that time they took control.

"A few years ago, I realised the source of my unhappiness was a work rut. My job was fine, but after two years I wasn't progressing and I wasn't passionate about it. So I took a leap and quit. I freelanced while I really focused on figuring out what I wanted to do every day. Not only have I now progressed up the ladder, but I've learnt loads of new skills, made new friends and reignited my passion."

Rachel, 30, publicist

"I was feeling like I was just going through the motions and then complaining about the same old things. I started seeing a counsellor to talk about it, which was the first step, and then I began compiling a list of things that I would like to do in the next two years. Since then, I've learned to surf in Bali and enrolled in an acting workshop – two things I've wanted to do but always had an excuse not to."

Leah, 27, nurse

WORDS MIRIAM RAPHAEL PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES.



GREEN LIGHT

INSPO ALERT

Struggling to come up with the vision for a reimagined you? Well, it might be inspiration that's lacking, says Johnson. Forget the crippling overload of info on the internet and turn to the shelves of your local library or bookstore. While you may or may not have touched a hardcover novel since your high school days, you'll be surprised at what you can get from their pages (particularly one that you want to read). Stories can motivate and recharge you, challenge your thinking and set you off on a new path. Think of it less as self-help and more like 'shelf help'. The same goes for interesting films or TV series that are going to talk to you about #lyf. Here are some of our favourites:



Leda, fashion editor
The Clan Of The Cave Bear
by Jean M. Auel

"Set back in caveman times, this book is about a girl who is orphaned and has to survive by herself. I was 19 when I read it, going through my first real break-up and this book put my life into perspective – If she can make it all by herself, then I can get on with my life!"



Josie, features editor
The Golden Girls

"I'd always thought that my life's path had to be: meet guy, settle down, grow old together. But this series showed me that friendship love is equally as important as romantic love. You can grow old with your girl gang – and eat lots of cheesecake while doing it!"



Kara, deputy editor/features director
Yes Please by Amy Poehler

"Amy talks a lot about her divorce, and I read her checklist of things people in unhappy relationships tell themselves in order to stay... I was doing them all, and I ended it soon after." 🍷