

Easy Work Is Hard Work Smartly Applied

Working smart = working hard at the right things.

Working dumb = working hard at the wrong things.

There's a distinction between working smart and working dumb, but there's no such distinction between working hard and not working hard.

When someone says "I live a balanced and healthy life", that means something like "I don't spend all my time and energy doing income-related activities. In addition to working hard at my job, I also work hard at staying fit, eating healthy, spending time with family, making room for my hobbies, attending birthday parties, and other things that are important to me." That's not the opposite of hard work. That's the definition of smart work.

This is a person who spends a lot of physical energy making sure they can be present to the people and pastimes that matter most to them. If you could put a hidden camera in their house, you would see lots of boring footage of them writing down lists, prepping food, jotting things on the calendar, returning phone calls, driving around town, putting out fires, listening patiently as someone vents to them about a problem, standing in long lines, preparing ahead of time to avoid the long lines, doing research about their areas of interests, saying "no" to low value requests, and a host of other things that would appear quite tedious to people who don't share their priorities. And that's precisely how your life appears to me and everyone else who isn't exactly like you.

Everyone is working hard all the time.

Some people work hard at avoiding work. Some people work hard at making their lives look really awesome on social media. Some people work hard at having fun. Some people work hard at traveling the world. Some people work hard at practicing their religion. Some people work hard at making a living without a traditional work schedule. Some people work hard at finding discounts. Some people work hard at mastering video games. We're all working hard at different things for different reasons.

If you ever find yourself snobbishly looking down on someone who "just doesn't get it" because they work too hard, that's because you believe they're spending too much time and energy on things that are low value to you. When you have those moments, try to remember that someone else is having the same moment about you.

The point I'm making here isn't about empathy though. I'm not asking you to be more empathetic the next time you feel inclined to judge someone who seems to work too hard.

The point is about opting out of the comparison game altogether. It's about evaluating your life in terms of "moments lived meaningfully" rather than "number of hours worked." It's about not allowing yourself to feel righteous or superior just because you only work a four hour work week.

I don't care about how much time you spend at the office and you shouldn't either. Why? Because just like everyone else in this world, you only have 24 hours a day and you're going to spend every second of it working on something. And if you're not working on the things that are right for you, then it really doesn't matter if you're at the office or at the beach. An unhealthy life is an unhealthy life no matter where you're located. You don't need to be at your job for 80 hours a week to be unhealthy. You can just as easily waste your life away at a beach house or at your buddy's house for only 20 hours a week.

Here's an old saying: "No one on their death bed wishes they had spent more time at the office."

True enough, but here's something else you should keep in mind: "No one on their death bed complains about that time they worked their butt off trying to finish that novel they always dreamed of writing."

Here's another one: "No one on their death bed complains about all the painful and uncomfortable hours they spent at the gym making sure they were realizing their physical potential."

Here's another one: "No one on their death bed complains about that one time they listened to their spouse or best friend vent about their problems for hours even though they really needed to get some sleep at the time."

Here's another one: "No one on their death bed complains about all the hours they spent listening to podcasts on health & nutrition or all the hours they spent shopping for the right foods when they could have saved time by just eating fast food every day."

Do you see the pattern here? All meaningful choices require sacrifice, compromise, initiative, and persistence. In short, hard work.

The thing to be feared isn't too much time at the office. The thing to be feared is too much time doing the wrong things.

The thing to be proud of isn't how many hours you choose or refuse to work per week. The thing to be proud of is how much room you make for the things that matter most to you.

You're already working your butt off (even if you're busy promoting a narrative about how much you hate work). Stop trying to avoid hard work and start working hard at the things

that are worth working for. And if you don't know what's worth working for, then work hard at figuring that out.

There is no easy life, only a good life.

“Easy work” is just hard work smartly applied.