

The end of the year is a time of cold and contempt. We're so close to defeating the nightmare of Christmas and then the finality of New Year's Eve attacks. And it gets nasty. A summary of the whole year climbs all over us. A reminder of unused gym passes, purchased language courses and kilos which were supposed to disappear but instead magically reproduced. Of course, we can always stick to a defiantly shouted 'the past is in the past, best to leave it fucking alone' and act unbothered by our own failures. But – let's be honest here – rare are the supermen, regardless of gender, who can enter a new year without making any resolutions.

Look around. It's so clear how disastrous this period of the year is – especially for sensitive minds. There are people who decorate their entire social pages with resolutions, just in case it went unnoticed they became a canoeing expert or got their first master degree before 40. Yes, yes, yes... I know. Achievements are important and we have to replace the colourful scout badges with something.

We fight these sneaky summaries and resolutions and yet, as 2nd January, most of us will wake up with a varying degree of hangover, remember all the muddied stories from the last year and begin, in great pains, to devise a new plan of improvement. It's urgent to solve this problem before the new year's resolutions drag us into an endless loop of self-accusations or before we make fools of ourselves on fb or IG. That's why I present to you a brand new plan of improvement for 2020. And I'm being absolutely serious. To handle this, I ask for help my very powerful ally.

Why this episode is called become your personal ninja

Etymologically, in the word *ninja*, the main sign *nin* consists of two smaller ones: upper *ha* 'blade' and lower *kokoro* 'heart'. Together, they create the meaning of 'secrecy, mystery, perseverance'. Therefore, *ninja* means literally 'a person trained in the art of invisibility'. It is debatable who exactly ninjas were. What's important for me is that in our minds they became a symbol of superhuman effectiveness. That's precisely what I mean. How to become – for yourself – an effective warrior who completes their objectives without wasting energy on getting lost in back-alleys. On showing off nor on empty talking. Focused and unbreakable. *Und* dismissive of the system, but more about that later.

Resolutions do happen. They're almost impossible to avoid.

That's why, I urge you, if your inner dynamic pushes you towards making a new year's resolution, please let it be understanding the right way to manage your energy. Pretty please. There is nothing more ground-breaking, innovative, future-oriented you could possibly do.

Forget about the hunt for promotion. Screw the conquer of your time (impossible, sorry, ask quantum physicists). I assume you'll climb K2 for pleasure, not for public self-gratification. Offer a breather to your kilograms, smoking, drinking, bedroom conquers and whatever else you managed to come up with. Energy is the new black.

What's the purpose of this exercise? To leave yourself in goddamn peace. To stop attempting to change tiny, silly details which don't make a grand difference, but take up hours of your time and attention. These six kilos don't mean as much as the feeling that unless you get

thinner, no one will ever accept you. But dealing with those six kilos will take a lot of your resources. Resources which could be invested into something else, much more nourishing.

How does the system fit into it all? In liberal capitalism we matter as long as we're productive, competitive and never stop the brutal fight for success. This system, in which we live, is built on rivalry, exploitation (of everything, including our very own selves) and on endless repetitions of a made-up belief that if we only try a little bit more, the paradise itself will be ours for the taking. So, yeah, fuck the system. Pretty *pretty* please, piss on 'em.

Start taking care of yourself. Lay the foundations and I promise the building constructed on them will only grow. Why? Because by deciding to take good care of your energy, you start to take back everything the system and your environment so ceaselessly try to rip from your hands. For non-believers, I have an example: for more than 2 decades, scientists have been researching how the perception of time influences human psychology. What we use nowadays is called a monochromatic time and is utterly unnatural – dependant on the work system, hyper-efficiency, the pace of huge cities where we live faster than anywhere else. Incompatible with the rhythm of nature.

As not to delve too deep into the abstract – in Middle Ages and Renaissance, the time not only belonged to God, therefore all operation on it were a crime, like lending money at an interest – since it meant getting wealthy over the time; it was also measure by church bells and festivities connected to the religious calendar. No one had a watch, no one wanted to forcibly manage time. I don't know if because of that people were happier, but for sure they knew which season it was, a knowledge that sometimes escapes corporations' employees in big cities. On the other hand, we got used to a belief that a faster tempo of living is an inherent part of civilizational progress. And no, I don't dream of this peculiar utopia in which, with the dawn of January the 2nd, you will throw away your clocks and calendars. I dream of a level-headed approach to whatever you will be trying to change with your New Year resolutions.

Think for a second – by trying to get skinnier, you want to control your weight; by trying to be more productive, you want to control your time. Incessantly, you want to have control over at least one of your life-switches. In any case, your focus isn't on resources you possess, but on things which you're either trying to get rid off (the so-called 'bad habits') or gain power over (like new capabilities). Occasionally, you focus on what you'll gain once you check all the boxes – a promotion, money...

Now, don't get me wrong. There is nothing conceptually wrong with achieving your goals nor on building a successful career and especially not in successes themselves. The issue is – we usually set out to achieve these ass-backwards. Wanting to succeed, we press on and on, ignoring all costs – physical or mental – just so we can reach the finish line destroyed, unable to deal with the world and definitely too worn out to enjoy our success. Corpses, which we abandon along the way, we treat them as collateral damage, ready to go through with every terrible thing that comes up as long as it takes us closer to our goal. Sometimes, we do these terrible things to other people – we forget about family, friends, ethics.

And now enters a ninja. Dressed all in black.

A good ninja is effective because of their energy management. Energy WHICH IS THE ONLY THING A PERSON HAS CONTROL OVER. They also manages their energy because it is a spring from which all the goodness flows: their strength to deliver, their physical abilities, their mental welfare, even their ability to experience the spiritual. Trying to do anything else is just like herding cats. Perhaps, energy management is an additional chore to be done daily, but it pays of hundredfold – in the shape of a personal source of reusable energy. It's that easy – in order to take good care of your energy, you need to allow it to recharge.

The problem is – no one wants to bloody understand this since everyone continues to exploit themselves in the most derogatory of ways, not noticing how they're hurting themselves and continue to contribute to the system which is unfair and... *hello!* based on exploitation. And before someone tells me there is nothing to be done, let me remind you that 10 years ago the job market was void of millennials. And nowadays even the biggest corporations need to take under consideration this gruelling, demanding generation because otherwise they wouldn't have anyone to hire. Thanks, kids, all the respect from me.

Going back to energy subject. If you have a steady supply of energy, you don't drag your face across cobblestone streets, too tired to stand straight every Friday. Therefore having an actual life becomes a possibility, self-growth becomes a possibility. And when (we were robbed of this expression too) sustainable growth becomes possible so do you as an individual human being, not just a nameless harrowing worker with a set potential for the sales' department. People, you have bodies, you have psyche – both emotions and mind, at the very least you have a soul. If you will starve one of these to death, no matter which, there will be consequences. And that's no avant-garde statement, there is elementary research about this. You need exactly seven components – magical potions – each in a specific dose, every day, all year.

7 magical potions

Connecting time (I use the original names from the 2001 David Pock's research???)

Each day, every day, you need to connect with other sentient beings – with the nature or other people. No, a small talk over fb doesn't count. There needs to be an emotional connection. This cannot be a professional meeting or carefree chit-chat over coffee on a break. You need honest, interpersonal connections for your cerebral circuits to work properly. If you're an introvert and your need for people is less pressing, it's time to move your ass from a couch and at least go for a walk. You *need* to have contact with something sentient which isn't you or an online artifact.

Down time

Whenever you aren't focused, you just exist without any goals, allowing thoughts to wander, keeping in touch with your body, this is when the slowdown comes. You could call it laziness, if it weren't for a fact how incredibly nourishing it is for both the brain, since, on neurobiological level, it discards the constant alertness of modern life, and for the psyche. More than few good ideas were born during down time.

Focus time

Concentration is as precious as fresh air. Especially with how rare true concentration is. Mostly, we're just stuck between two activities simultaneously. Our ability to focus is being destroyed by social media, but also phones whose constant 'push' announcements put our minds in hyperactivity. This gives the exactly opposite result to concentration. To work productively, finish and deliver ideas, you need time and focus without social medias, answering emails or any other disturbers. All research I have found, seems to show that you need to devote a specific amount of time for creative work during which you need to put away everything threatening to distract you. And, yes, multitasking is EW. So much Ew, it may be difficult to imagine. Read Kahneman, if you don't believe me.

Physical time

A human needs to move. The end. A walk to get wine from the kitchen doesn't count.

Fun time

Think about spontaneity and creativity as wild animals. For sure, they won't come running upon hearing you whistle, but we can work on giving them space. Tempted, they will visit. Everything containing a spirit of fun, spontaneity, new experience and stimuli not only helps your mind rest, but literally waters your brain crops. No, the so-called creative work, no matter how ambitious, doesn't count. This is supposed to be UNPRODUCTIVE.

Sleep – yes, sleep.

Sleep deprivation affects so many aspects of our lives – from affect dysfunctions, through slower reflexes, worse perception, lack of concentration, to reduction of cognitive functions. I would need a separate episode to explain it all. Alas, sleep is a resource, we're the fastest to discard whenever we have something 'pressing' to do. Sad news, your mind needs its rest. And your nervous system needs its rest. And, generally, your whole body needs its time to regenerate. What's more, sleep is not only about resting. It also means consolidation of everything you experienced this day, a contact with your subconsciousness. And sometimes the results seem out of this world. It is, after all, believed that Mendeleev dreamed up his periodic table and Keith Richards – his guitar riff to *I can't get no satisfaction*.

Time in – healthy thinking

By contrast to unhealthy thinking – the overthinking, these quiet inner reflections over yourself and events are desired. Deep thinking, pondering, looking into your own thoughts. This is the time you use to calmly think things through. It doesn't need to be long, as long as it doesn't transform into mental diarrhoea. My beloved daydreaming also finds its home here. Daydreaming is just the best. It's time to use your active imagination, visions unlimited by rationality. I wasn't able to find solid proof, but I'm willing to bet that reading smart things with understanding also fits the bill.

I like this idea that self-care doesn't necessarily mean luxurious spa or shopping, some high-horse activities tasked with boosting one's ego. It's a patient process of building a life, from which we won't have to constantly run away. That's why in 2020 I hope you'll become your very own ninjas. Black. White. Blue, whichever you want. Take care of yourselves – with

wisdom, not stupidly, capitalistically. That would be the most revolutionary move we could create together.

This Nightfall comes to an end. Thank you for your time and these last seven months together. There were 33 episodes of a true intellectual adventure. I'll have a week long break, on principle, and then let's start off 2020 with a new season of *At Nightfall*. There will be more of Niedźwiecka's rants, as always morose, there will be experts, real life people with real life histories and real life examples because the Christmas episode was a total but positive surprise.

And so, good night and good luck.

New Year's resolutions are like mosquitos – they stick by you, refusing to leave you in peace. We feel the need to become somehow better, more organised just because one year ended and another began. In this episode, I'll show you that 'Energy is the new black' and how to utilise the New Year's coercions without locking oneself in a self-inflicted guilt loop.

- ✚ How to become your personal ninja?
- ✚ Why energy management works?
- ✚ 7 magical potions



CONNECTING TIME

Space to connect with something living: nature, people. Real connections and experiences, not virtual ones.

PHYSICAL TIME

Physical activity.

PLAY TIME

Carefree: element of fun, new stimulation, imagination, taking in something that is an inspiration or art, without the pressure of productivity.

You don't HAVE to do everything everyday. You don't have to do it at 100%. But you need to use the potions systematically. Because taking care of yourself is not a luxury spa but rather building a life that you won't be constantly forced to run away from.

TIME IN

Healthy brainstorm: time to take look inside yourself and reflect on what's going on on the in-and out-side.

FOCUS TIME

Space for focus: now you're working – without distractors and multitasking.

DOWN TIME

Slowing down: just being, without purpose, without goal just being, in touch with your body and your emotions.

SLEEP

Sleeping without cheating. Without sacrificing it for work or a TV series.