

From Smartphones back to Moleskine

Summary The chapter “From Smartphones back to Moleskine” introduces the author as a person who updates her avatar to now include a new feature for “mindfulness”. Through relatable anecdotes her path comes alive, including the overcoming of old patterns and previous prejudice against meditation and mindfulness. Also topics such as letting go, self-efficacy and self-love are discussed which are an important prerequisite and stand in close relation to a mindful way of living. The term “mindfulness” will be explained and important thinkers in the field of mindfulness such as Eckhart Tolle and Jon Kabat-Zinn will be introduced. The story of the author’s first meditation leads to an introduction to meditation in which some advantages as well as important basics are explained. The chapter additionally addresses the idea of a “spiritual capitalism” we experience today and introduces the term “part-time tree” as a potential compromise. Finally, mindfulness’ high relevance in digital times is illuminated – especially with regard to information overload we experience today. Here, a fresh impetus is given on how to get from “mind full” to “mindful” in order to not get lost in the digital cosmos in these times of distraction.

For a long time I had the feeling of being on a speeding train that never stopped and that I would never leave. Through the train window images flew by like in fast-forward-mode. Everything happened so fast that what I had just experienced was almost immediately forgotten again. However, interestingly, I rarely even looked out of the window – for that I had no time. Instead I was always busy doing something called “work”. Paying attention deliberately and mindfully was something I rarely did and it also did not bother me that all these images simply breezed along. On the contrary – things could not go fast enough as there was still so much to do, to accomplish and to achieve. I lived this way for many years, never feeling a need for change but rather wanting to ever increase the pace and influence of images and impressions flying by. Until suddenly everything changed...

Seemingly out of nowhere I came to realize that this train ride was my life and I reflected on it and thought: “Why is this train going so fast? Why does it never stop? And why does this woman with the childish button nose never look out the window?” It felt like awakening from a bad dream when I realized that I was this woman and that I could never leave this train nor was even allowed to. “I want to get out!”, I was screaming on the inside. “Stop! I please want to get out!” – but it was as though no one could hear me, and even my own body did not respond. I was stuck!

Today, roughly two years later, I am indeed on a train bound for my hometown, Berlin. I have spent the past two hours simply looking out the window with a smile on my face, deciding to write this book, and to pen down the manuscript in an old-school Moleskine which I had bought earlier at Cologne Central Station. Despite owning a MacBook, tablet and smartphone I chose this Moleskine-Notebook because it simply felt good to use an analog product, to put real letters on paper (just like in my school days, long before I entered the

working world), to feel it in my hands and to fill real pages with my thoughts. Since I work and live in the digital field this development could be viewed as exceptional or at least as atypical for me. But what is typical anyway? And what if I want to modify exactly this “typical” image that people have of me? In digital language one would probably say: I am updating my avatar! “Would you like to start the update process?” “Yes! I would. Start the update.”

Zooooooooooooom!

- Update completed –

1.1 Updating my Avatar

In its original form I wrote the text “From Smartphones back to Moleskine” in 2010 – shortly before I left my job as Team Leader Mobile at a business consultancy a year later, declining several responsible and highly remunerative offers for executive positions with established businesses in order to set up my own – without having any savings or a prospective project. During this and the previous year I fainted several times due to circulation problems, suffered constantly from visual migraines and high cholesterol levels. A stress-induced gastritis was to follow. Still I continued on my racing train because there were so many more steps to take on the career ladder. 14-hour work days, business trips, further training (starting as extra occupational evening course three years ago, followed by further education and leadership coaching), a household including boyfriend and two cats and a side job as singer and ringtone producer were all no problem for me after all. That was doable...In a first attempt to improve my work-life-balance I started to take Thai Chi classes with my then-boyfriend. I thought this would surely calm me and provide some balance. The only problem was that I would always arrive late, stressed and exhausted from some meeting and it annoyed me how these self-contained people formed energetic currents with their hands and bodies, appearing so happy. This stressed me out even more and despite my initial euphoria including a complete outfit and Thai-Chi shoes (yes, they are a thing!) I quit the course shortly after. Thai-Chi was for mystics and hippies, I thought back then. Surely none of them had a proper job. How wrong I was – but only much later should I realize this.

At some point – and I believe it was the last straw I needed to make the change – my GP told me after a routine examination: “If you continue to live this way I am not sure you will be celebrating your 35th birthday!” This hit me hard. I was not even 30 at the time! The book I decided to write shortly after, I am now writing almost five years later than I had thought but the seeds had been sown that day. Life pulls you into a speeding train over and over again and pow! – another year has passed! And there is always a reason why we believe that we do not have the time for certain things. However, maybe at the same time that is all part of it. It is a process to find oneself and to understand that not all people who live calmly and peacefully are necessary mystics and hippies. Sometimes it has to get extremely loud before you can hear.

Becoming self-employed as digital consultant (focus mobile) and singer/speaker took me every minute of the day. It permanently occupied all my time. But self-employment also means to learn a lot about oneself since you are constantly engaged with yourself. This encounter with myself, the challenges, but also the opportunities, the people I met on my journey and continue to meet – all this has inspired me to write this book. Especially as digital consultant where it is about successfully positioning brands in a world shaped by constant change, shifting needs and new technological developments, it has become a struggle to shift down a gear, to pause or to leave the train. It seems to have become the norm to always be three steps ahead and to focus on the update of the update's update. We rarely remain in the present. We are making "future business" after all. Finding the path to calmness and tranquility in times of continuous acceleration, stability in change, humanity in the face of artificial intelligence and mindfulness in times dominated by technologies such as smartphones and an always-on-culture, is an art we have to learn anew.

The update of my update is now writing these lines and is looking forward to giving you, too, an impulse for your next software update including "mindfulness" as an extra feature.