

# On Sabbatical

May 2024 | CK




# How My Sabbatical Started

- Left company in Jan 2023
- Wanted to take at least a year off
  - Had not taken more than 2 weeks off in my 25 years of professional life
- [Jimmy](#) sent me [this article](#) on sabbatical – good inspiration

# What I Did

- ✓ Travel (~20 cities) ✈️
- ✓ Spend time with family (+ added a new member, our 3rd child) 🧒
- ✓ Reading (~a book per week) 📖
- ✓ Journaling (200+ pages on Google docs) ✍️
- ✓ Many, many meetings - old and new relationships 🤝

# What I Wished, But Didn't Do

- ➖ Travel alone to an “unbeaten path” destination 
- ➖ Pick up a new sports or hobby 
- ➖ Have a stretch of “truly blank” days - hard to do w/ family 

# My One Goal

- Figure out: **“What should I do next in life?”**
  - A common question for post-exit founders
- Let the soul searching + mission discovery begin

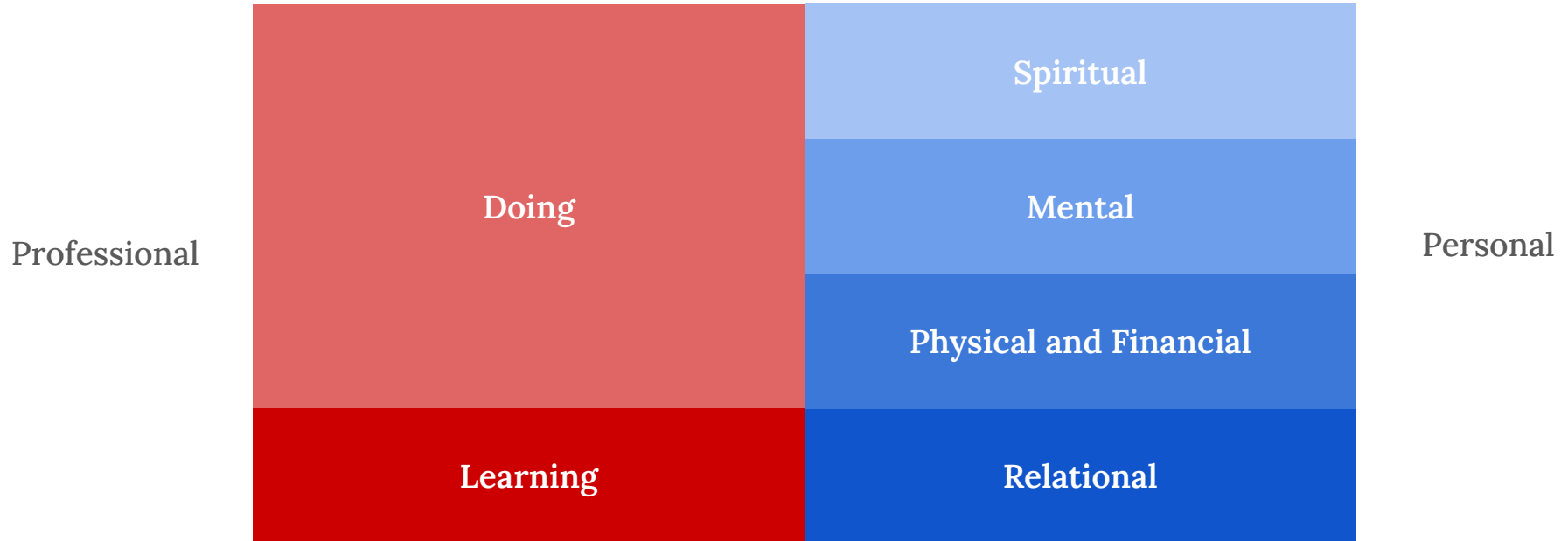
# Soul Searching: The Framework

- Ikigai



# Soul Searching: The Framework

- Holistic Life Dimensions: Professional + Personal



## So.. The Result?

- Sabbatical was one of the best decisions I've ever made
- Found what I want to do for the next 5-10 years
- Started working on a new stealth project
  - An AI-enabled, purpose-driven tech startup
  - A platform/community for sharing professional wisdom



# Lessons Learned

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright orange orb on the horizon, casting a long, shimmering reflection across the dark, choppy water. The sky is a deep blue, filled with scattered, soft white and pinkish clouds. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Photo by [Joseph Barrientos](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Some Things I Learned

- You can't put a deadline on soul searching
- It's all about people
- Happiness = Not comparing with others
- Start with the end in mind
- Busy can be good, if you can get energy

# 1. You Can't Put A Deadline On Soul Searching

- Soul searching, finding next mission = hearing your inner voice
  - Stay on it, be intentional - but you can't force it
  - The voice will come find you one day. Not the other way around
- Same as marriage
  - No one says "I'll get married by March 15, 2025"
  - Love comes to you first, and there's no ETA for love.
  - So you wait. But it doesn't mean you're not doing anything

## 2. It's All About People

- Talking to people was the best source of learning and inspirations
- Met people from different walks of life (not just in my tech bubble)
- Three “magic questions” - lead to great conversations 100% time
  - “How’s life?”
  - “What are you up to these days?”
  - “How can I help you?”

### 3. Happiness = Not Comparing With Others

- During my sabbatical, my friends and connections:
  - Built hot new companies in the Gen AI space
  - Raised big VC funding and got some great PR
  - Became C-suites or board members at brand name companies
  - Went to galas and dinners in tuxedos and dresses
- And they shared all of these constantly on social media!



### 3. Happiness = Not Comparing With Others

- Had to constantly remind myself: We all run our own solo race



Hurdles are mostly in us:

- Constant comparison
- Self-doubt
- Anxieties
- Discontentment

## 4. Start With The End In Mind

- For me, the single most useful question in sabbatical was:
- **“If I had 5 years to live, what would I do?”**
  - There was no other question that brought more clarity to my mission-finding process

## 5. Busy Can Be Good, If You Can Get Energy

- During sabbatical, my schedule was never really empty
  - Family and other personal obligations
  - 50+ investment [portfolios](#), including [my GP fund](#)
- But these were mostly “no stress, energy gaining” events
  - Spending time w/ family, meeting brilliant people = invigorating
- Examine schedule from energy gain/loss POV, not just how filled it is



An aerial photograph of a beach. The top half of the image shows turquoise waves with white foam crashing onto the shore. The bottom half shows a wide, sandy beach in shades of orange and tan. Two small figures of people are walking away from the water on the beach, leaving long shadows. The text "Some Tips For You" is centered over the waves in a dark, serif font.

# Some Tips For You

# Everyone Needs a Sabbath

- What if a diver, too busy underwater, forgets to come up and breathe?



# Tips For Taking Time Off

- Be Intentional and Plan For It
- Go Somewhere Alone
- Be Effective At Time Management
- Talk With Family And Get Their Support

# 1. Be Intentional and Plan For It

- First step = Deciding to take time off
  - Ideally 6mo+. But even a “micro sabbatical” (eg 2 wks) helps
- Plan macro, not micro
  - Get a broad sense of what you want to do and achieve
  - But don't treat it as a project. Don't do the same calendaring



## 2. Go Somewhere Alone

- Solo travel = the best way for reflection and introspection
- Consider doing at least one crazy/memorable trip
  - But, do not die
  - Not doing this was my #1 regret
- If you're single - check out [Remote Year](#) (H/T: [Erik](#))

### 3. Be Effective At Time Management

- Budget the transition time
  - You need transition time (eg ~2 wks) to get into the “sabbatical zone”
  - It’s like camping. You’re still busy the first few hours, before settling in
- Protect your time
  - When they know you’re taking time off, random people ping you w/ asks
  - Protect your time. Your time is not a public property
  - But, be generous whenever possible – You’re also asking other people’s time

## 4. Talk With Family And Get Their Support

- Don't be “sort of in, sort of out”
  - Get properly excused and go away
  - Feel bad? Return the favor. Send your spouse to a solo trip too
- Family trips are great
  - Two birds with one stone: Expand horizon + Spend time w/ family
  - But not the same as a solo trip, especially with young kids



A photograph of a park path lined with large, mature trees. The path is paved and leads into the distance. A bench is visible on the right side of the path. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text "Thank You" is written in a large, white, serif font, and "My LinkedIn" is written in a smaller, white, serif font below it, underlined.

# Thank You

My LinkedIn