Choices: left, right, up and down

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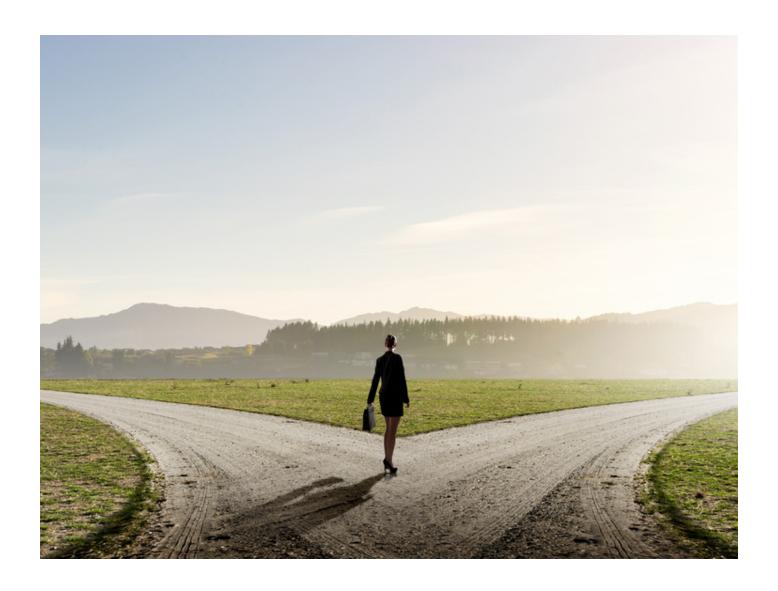Choice, a world people might dread or love.

Since a young age we have all been confronted on a daily basis with various choices, and as we grow older such decisions are having a stronger impact on our life.

Like many other students, we are usually confronted with two choices: university path or practical path? As a society, we tend to glamourise and romanticise academic lifestyle - it has always been viewed as the smart path in life, the successful path, the happier path.

As times have changed and humanity have advanced, we have broken down such norms and proven the importance of the balance needed in all life paths, in this modern world. Yet, the choices don't stop here, might I say, they scatter across all kinds of directions. How many of you who chose the academic lifestyle, have heard or has been ingrained in you the following ideology: Bachelors, Masters, PhD, job?

At school as we grow up, we are taught and been prepared that the University is the 'right and only' choice, so you do so and get your Bachelor's Degree. Yet, there you are again at this crossroad, where you need to make yourself stand out, differentiate yourself from the pack as you will have a more successful job and a better pay grade. So you do so and get a Master's Degree, and you are back at this crossroad again and it's time to make a decision once more; Do I do a PhD, or not? Of course I should, it's an honour and privilege to have the Dr. title and obviously with this, comes a better pay. Or you can go down the path of getting a job, yet you are reminded that if you had a PhD in the scientific world, you would be better off.

This vicious circle eventually stops, when the necessity of earning money to survive comes to destabilise this balance. We have been ingrained as STEM (Science, Technology, Engi-

neering, and Mathematics) students, that our success equals to a PhD or being an Engineer, we are taught that the path we walk on, is a linear stretch whereas in reality it is not. What if you took advantage of those hidden loops? What if I went straight from a Bachelor's to a PhD? What if I just did 2 Master Degrees or Certificates? What if I get a job after my Undergraduate Degree and decide to come back for a Masters or PhD after 5 or 10 or even 15 years of having a job? What if we get out of this linear path, of this bubble built around us which dictates what is the right way and wrong path to take in life?

What if all our academic choices did not have to bear such a heavy impact on our life? What if we relieve ourselves from the societal pressure and pressure for academic excellence and think, what would I enjoy doing in life? What if I was destined to be a Teacher? Or a Nurse? Or a Firefighter? Or a Barista? Or an Electrician?

If the fear of failure and academic pressure did not exist. And yes, you might argue you may not have the glamorous life and rolling in cash, but what price would you put to your happiness? What price would you put on waking up every morning excited to go to work, to look forward after your holidays to return and do something you love?

In all our life, we have been dictated around our choices, good or bad. What if, today you took a second chance, and made a choice that would make you happy, a choice that might be as small as enrolling in a painting class, deciding to switch careers? Choices are always around us, and as a society which is continuously evolving and changing, what if we start making more conscious choices about our life and what would make US happy; not what people want from you, or think you should do; what do you truly want to do?