

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/lessons-from-hard-work-and-heartbreak/>

Adrian Rodriguez, co-founder and CEO of Dreamlinks, shares two lessons about entrepreneurship that he learned from a personal relationship. Like a relationship, starting a company takes work, and you have to be willing to do small but important things. Some relationships end, as do some projects, but heartbreak can lead to new paths.



Transcript

- This next journey is extremely personal, 00:00:06,660 but as personal journeys tend to be, it gave me a number of special abilities.. So I met in Los Angeles when I was working at AMPAworks, a woman named Molly Burke, who is a sensational YouTuber and is totally blind.. And she really just turned my world upside down.. I had never met someone like her.. She was just, you know, beautiful, smart and had created this community to help people through bullying and mental health, the things that she had overcome in her life.. And she would have this Patreon where she would go live and, you know, in a sense like, facilitate for people.. And I just saw her use this platform she had built of 4 million subscribers across Instagram and YouTube, et cetera, to do really good things.. And obviously, I fell in love with her.. And we move in together.. And if you wanna see it on the internet, I would encourage you to watch her videos..

They're great, and you know, I think she's really educating people and so I could do a whole talk on just how great of an entrepreneur she is and the lessons I learned from her.. But suffice to say that I took away two really important things.. The first is the notion of stewardship.. And one of the most important lessons I learned at ETL was this.. Work with the people who are staying after the party to clean up, right? Those are the people you want on your team.. And I'm sure like, someone's parents is like rolling their eye right now, but like, but it's true.. Starting a company is not glamorous most of the time.. You have to be willing to take out the trash, you have to be willing to write code, you have to be willing to go into Illustrator or just do whatever needs to be done.. And I think that for me, entering a very serious relationship with another person with a disability and who had service animals and a lot of, for me, it was this huge opportunity to kind of understand what it means to care for another person every day.. No breaks, you know, my first breath would, you know, would revolve around doing something for us..

And that was something that I think has carried with me as I look at my companies now, et cetera.. And of course, if you have watched the videos, you know that Molly and I are no longer together.. Again, I would encourage you to watch her videos.. I stand by the way she has portrayed our relationship.. And it brings me to another lesson that I heard from Melinda Gates at ETL.. And it was a lesson she was, you know, promoting broadly, which is this idea of let your heart break and no one wants a broken heart.. No one wants to be in that mode.. And it's not a good mode to be in.. It's not a productive mode to be in, but what you want is the heart that comes back afterwards.. And for me, going through such a profound experience with

this person and me realizing, you know, what it, you know, my limitations about being the right person for, you know, everyone, you know, you ultimately realize that there is, you know, such a thing as fit, et cetera..

Ultimately I think has made me more willing to accept my path in the world.. And you'll have to do that as entrepreneur, right? We can call it pivoting, but it's deeper than pivoting, right? 'Cause we get attached to the things that we make.. We love the things that we make, but we need to let that heart break sometimes so it can continue to grow back..