

Living Life Richer

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Being constantly on the go allows little time for reflection, long-term planning, and enjoying the present. Choosing how best to live life richer is a personal decision that requires taking a holistic look at life. Living life richer is a journey toward a life lived to the fullest and without regrets.

Happiness studies show that the aspects of life that give meaning and satisfaction can be summarized by four factors:

- strong, trusting relationship with one or more people
- healthy body and mind
- enough money to live comfortably without constant financial concerns
- knowing oneself and how to nurture and care for oneself

When these factors get out of balance, life is not as satisfying as an individual would like it to be. A lifestyle characterized by constant busyness can foster irritability, poor decision-making, negative health consequences, weakened relationships, expedient rather than thoughtful parenting, inability to cope with everyday events, and many other conditions. Individuals may discover they are “hurrying more and enjoying life less.”

How does this apply to me?

You may sense that your life is out of control and not headed in the direction you desire.

To some who are older, it may seem their younger lives were spent making a living, but now are spending their older years trying to

regain their health. Are your current eating, physical activity, and other health-related habits likely to contribute to a long, healthy life? Are there changes you could make that would allow you to make a living, yet protect your health? What benefits would you expect to have from good physical health and financial security, now and long into the future?

New Year's resolutions often include eating better, being wiser about using money, exercising more, and paying more attention to important relationships. By the end of January, the resolve to achieve those goals often wanes. What kind of event might occur that would increase your motivation to stick to your resolutions? Would it take a serious illness or accident, extreme financial distress, or the disruption of a valued relationship to trigger change? What resolutions do you make year after year? What would need to change to make your resolutions a reality?

Why, and how, could you live life richer by making some lifestyle changes? The following scenarios and questions can help prompt your reflections.

Scenarios

Learn to Say No

On the last day of work before retiring, Janice turned in all of her work-related keys. Not only was her keychain lighter, so was her sense of responsibility.

Short of retirement, what current activities and responsibilities could you eliminate or reduce to lighten your load? Which activities are most satisfying and which ones give less satisfaction? Why do you often say "yes" when you want to say "no"?

Stop Making Excuses

Wendy was the "Queen of Excuses." One weekend as she was watching TV, she heard an author promote his latest book on making life changes by eliminating excuses. Wendy didn't order his book, but she did make a list of why healthy relationships, good health, financial security, and personal growth were important to her. Her list included such statements as: "I want to live to see

The person who has lived the most is not the one who has lived the longest, but the one with the richest experiences.

~ Jean-Jacques Rousseau

my grandchildren grow to adulthood," "I want to be physically able to care for myself," "I want to have a financial cushion instead of debt," and "I want to graduate from college."

What excuses do you use that get in the way of accomplishing your "wants"? Why are healthy relationships, financial security, good health, and caring for self important to you?

Develop Supportive Relationships

Erma Bombeck, author and humorist, said "People shop for a bathing suit with more care than they do a husband or wife. The rules are the same. Look for something you'll feel comfortable wearing. Allow for room to grow."

Do your friends and family support your attempts to improve yourself or pursue your goals? Are you encouraged by those around you to be your best self? Do you have "toxic" friends – the kind that spread negativity and dampen rather than lift your spirits? Are you the kind of friend you want to have?

Set Goals

Characters in the movie, "The Bucket List," intentionally did what they wanted to accomplish before they died.

Have you made a "bucket list"? If not, write down at least three to five lifetime goals. (Achieving goals is more likely if you write them down.) What is on your list? What could you do right now to achieve the items on your list?

Find Work Satisfaction

Few of his co-workers liked to see Joe come to work. Joe hated his job and wasn't shy about letting everyone around him know how much he hated it. Joe often said he'd quit the job if he didn't need the money.

Do you work at your job just because you need the money? Does what you are currently doing match what you want to do? What could you do to acquire or create a more desirable job? More education? Willingness to accept less pay? Obtain the finances to launch a new business?

Clarify Your Values

Sharon had a case of conflicting values, although she hadn't thought of her situation like that. Sharon valued orderliness and being on time. She detested messiness and tardiness. Unfortunately her children didn't always operate on her schedule. Sharon often had to leave her home untidy, so she could get the kids to school and herself to work on time.*

Do you have values that conflict? How do you resolve the internal conflict that occurs when both cannot be fully accommodated? Could you alter your expectations? Which values are so important they need strengthening, even at the expense of other values?

* Clarifying your values is key to making meaningful change. Values guide your actions even though those values may be unrecognized, unacknowledged, and perhaps unquestioned. You may be unaware of certain values until those values conflict.

Build and Maintain Strong, Trusting Relationships

Human beings are social creatures with an innate need to connect with others. The quality of those connections ranks first in rating scales on happiness. Keys to building and maintaining strong, trusting relationships and other family strengthening information can be found at www.ksre.ksu.edu/families/. Parenting materials can be found at www.k-state.edu/wvparent/wondhome.htm.

Healthy Body and Mind

Lifestyle factors play a pivotal role in promoting a person's health and decreasing risk of chronic disease. Physical activity, eating healthfully, not smoking, and getting



enough sleep are a few such factors that contribute to good health. Information on lowering a person's risk of disease and maintaining optimal health is available at www.ksre.ksu.edu/humannutrition/.

Financial Security

In measures of happiness, after a certain amount of wealth is achieved, having more money does not increase one's happiness. However, having adequate funds to meet life's basic needs and some of life's wants is important to a sense of security and life satisfaction. A variety of ways to ensure financial security can be found at www.ksre.ksu.edu/financialmanagement/.

Nurture and Care for Self

Self-actualization is the ongoing pursuit of one's interests, creativity, and the creation of one's best self. In order for a person to be able to form healthy relationships, engage in healthful behavior, and keep finances in check, the person must first be knowledgeable and comfortable with himself or herself. Information on nurturing and caring for self is available at:

<http://hillsboroughfcs.ifas.ufl.edu/FamilyPubsA-Z/Balancing/BasicsOfBalancingHandout.pdf>.

References & Resources:

Small Steps to Health and Wealth, by Barbara O'Neil and Karen Ensle. Has monthly finance and health messages.

Public site: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/ssbw/>

Educator site:
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/ssbw/interall>
Health Finance page:
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/healthfinance/>
Financial Fitness Quiz and Calendar
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/default.asp#resources>
Stages of Change Behavior and
Locus of Control Theory

Intentional Harmony, University of Illinois Extension, web.extension.uiuc.edu (available through some county and district extension offices and from K-State specialists Debra Sellers, dsellers@ksu.edu, and Sharolyn Flaming Jackson, sharolyn@ksu.edu)

Slow Food Movement: www.slowfoodusa.org

Slowness Movement: www.slowmovement.com

References for Happiness Research:

Public Television Series, "Tal Ben-Shahar – Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness," <http://forum-network.org/lecture/positive-psychology-science-happiness/>

"Bhutan: Taking the Middle Path to Happiness," www.bhutan-film.com/

References and Additional Resources for Minimal Limitations Due to Health

Consumer resources concerning nutrition, physical fitness, and disease prevention
www.healthfinder.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

Current information from nutrition experts
www.nutrition.gov

Physical activity and sports information
www.fitness.gov

SWITCH: How To Change Things When Change is Hard by Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Broadway Books, 2010; ISBN 978-0-385-52875-7

References for Building Family Strengths

MF2251 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Communication Fact Sheet*

MF2250 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Decision-Making Fact Sheet*

MF2255 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Delegating Fact Sheet*

MF2249 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Goal-Setting Fact Sheet*

MF2254 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Organizing the Household, Fact Sheet*

MF2253 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Stress Management Fact Sheet*

MF2252 *Managing Time, Work and Family: Time Management Fact Sheet*

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