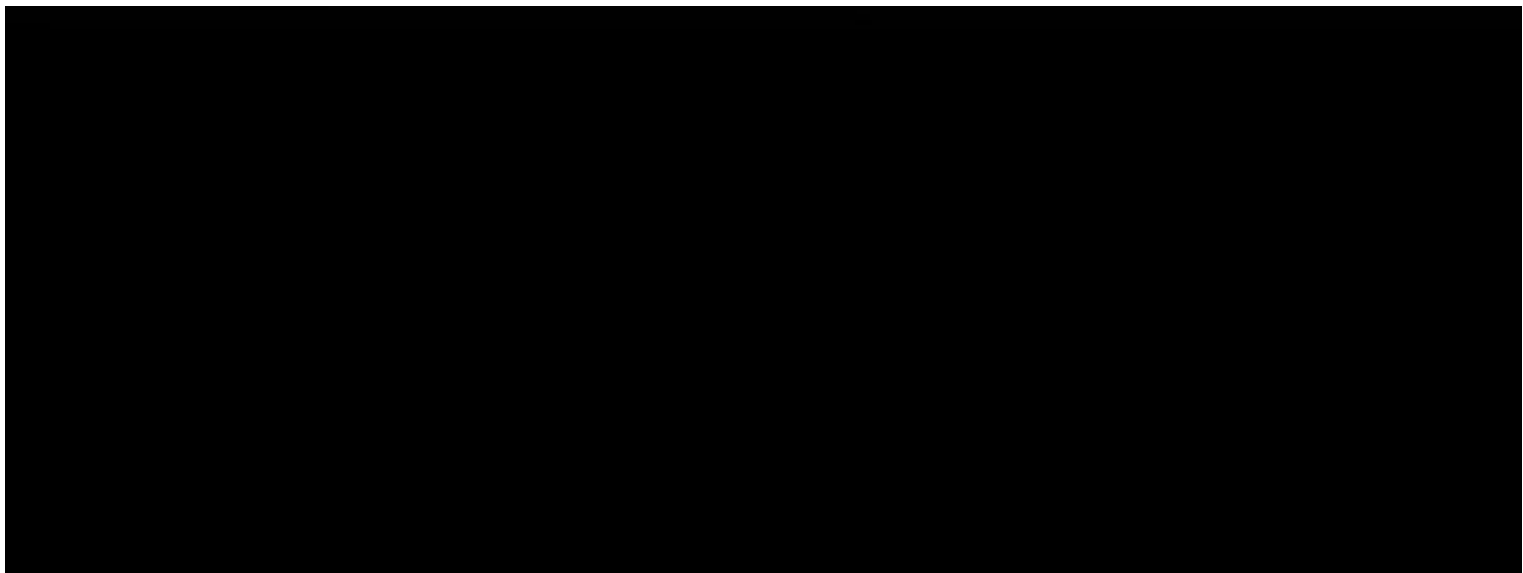




finding your smile 

ezine



Simple solutions for closing the smile gap in mid-life by Colin Hiles

Solution 2.

How are you going to spend your dash?

*The clock of life is wound but once, And no man has the power
To tell just where the hands will stop, At late or early hour.
To lose one's wealth is sad indeed: To lose one's health is more:
To lose one's soul is such a loss, As no man can restore.
The present only is our own, Live, Love, toil with a will -
Place no faith in 'tomorrow' - For the clock may then be still.*

- Anonymous

At its most basic, the gift of life is a gift of time, energy, and freedom. But nothing about simply being alive answers the next question: How shall we use our time, energy, and freedom to express the meaning of our life in the world? Put differently: What shall our being alive amount to?

Time Poverty

One of the greatest shortages we experience in life is time. Most people suffer from what's been labelled "time poverty". Many of my clients find that due to pressure from work and home, they don't feel they have enough of this precious commodity to do all the things they must, or more importantly, wish to do. They feel overworked, tired, and incapable of meeting all the responsibilities they have taken on. Time is a gift and with that gift comes the power of choice. How we spend each minute/hour/day of our life is our choice.

Time Management – The Myth

Let's clear something up straight away - there really is no such thing as Time Management. It's impossible to manage time. All we can really manage is our efforts and activities - ultimately ourselves. Time is one way we measure progress. To get a handle on the challenge of "time poverty" we have to stop using the excuses, "if only I had the time", or "I'll do it when I find the time". The reality is that if we want time, we have to make it. Right now you are finding the time for all the activities you're engaged in. The question is, what activities? Is your time filled with work activities, commuting, and other people's priorities, while the meaningful stuff gets put on hold?

In any given moment stop and ask yourself this powerful question:

"Is what I'm currently spending time on, or who I'm spending my time with, adding to the quality of my life or taking away from it?"

From Time to Prime Time

Are you choosing to spend your time with frantic activity or on what's important? When we spend time engaging in the things that move us closer to living our priorities and core values, we're spending prime time. I've found one of the first steps to manifesting a more meaningful existence in the second half of life is the ability to distinguish between prime time activities and all other activities. A prime time activity is one that gives you the greatest sense of joy, happiness, and fulfilment. Here is a sample list from the audiences I've asked:

- Playing with my children
- Writing poetry
- Doing meaningful work
- Exercising
- Doing absolutely nothing (what a concept!)
- Reading inspiring literature
- Walking in nature
- Making love
- Learning to play my guitar
- Playing sport
- Having a girlie night with my best friends
- Cooking a new recipe
- Helping out at my favourite charity
- Skiing
- Doing something wild and spontaneous
- Yoga
- Teaching the children at Sunday school
- Listening to music
- Dancing to Salsa
- Having a long hot soak in the tub

Our guiding purpose with every 24 hour-period we are given, is to manage ourselves in such a way that we turn more of our time into prime time, and achieve the greatest possible return of happiness and fulfilment.

I'll leave you with this beautiful poem my colleague Pete sent me. It starts by asking an intriguing and ultimately insightful question:

How will you spend your dash?

***I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on his tombstone from the beginning to the end***

***He noted that first came his date of birth
and spoke the following dates with eyes full of tears***

***but he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years 1929 - 2004***

***For that dash represents all the time that he spent alive on earth
and now only those who loved him knew what that little line was worth***

***For it matters not, how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash***

***So think about this long and hard are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can be rearranged***

***If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real
and always try to understand the way other people feel,***

***And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more,
And love the people in our lives like we've never loved before***

If we treat each other with respect remembering that this special dash might only last a while,

***So when your eulogy's being read with your life actions to re-hash,
would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?***

Bottom line

Time is a gift, be wise how you spend it.

Action Time

I invite you to stop the world for a moment. Sit quietly, read and re-read that last line. Give yourself the time to think deeply about this insightful question.

Take out a piece of paper and write your full name, date of birth, and a small dash next to it. Now, from the last ezine, you know how many days that dash represents – approximately 27,000. Understand that you're already a certain way down the dash. Look at that open-ended dash and think about what it means to you. Since you don't know how long you'll be here, HOW do you want to spend your precious gift called life?

Start to change HOW you're spending your time by firstly listing all your prime time activities, the activities that give you the greatest sense of joy, happiness and fulfilment. Secondly, find ways to incorporate more of what's on your list into your day-to-day routine.

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