



Wellbeing Insights

Midlife crisis? What do you really want to do now you're grown up?

Recently Kate Halfpenny wrote her column of this title. It is interesting to read that what follows is an awareness that after building the career and acquiring the trappings of material prosperity, comes a need for something more. As Halfpenny pinpoints, "I want to build a second act with meaning which transcends money." Indeed.

This notion of 'transcending money' is a worthy one. Richard Wiseman, in his book entitled, *59 seconds: Think a little, change a lot*, writes of some research about money in relation to happiness. He refers to a study on happiness and money conducted upon the winners of the Illinois State Lottery*, "Contrary to popular belief, those who had won the lottery, were no more or less happy than those in the control group...In fact, there was only one difference: the people in the control group derived significantly more pleasure from the simple things in life." Apparently, beyond catering for the necessities of life, an increase in income does not result in a significantly happier life.

We humans tend, when we find something which brings us pleasure, to want more of it. Not only do we want more of it, acquiring it may become the 'be all and the end all' in our measures of success. And thereby lies the rub. We run up against another aspect of human nature – 'hedonistic habituation'. This refers to the tendency of becoming accustomed to the same wonderful experience as it occurs again and again. We adapt to the experience and don't derive as much pleasure from it anymore. Perhaps it is this which has Kate Halfpenny – and she is by no means alone – wistfully wanting more than money which after a certain point becomes hollow in its benefits. It may be for this reason that the 'simple things in life' may hold more attraction after necessities are catered for.

What you may decide to bring into your life in your second act may well be constructing your meaning in other ways beyond possessions, such as in living a 'good life' and being a 'good person.' When it comes down to it, it is now cliched, but still a truism, that 'you can't take it with you.' Good lives are those that are lived according to a set of values and within ones' strengths. Being a good person, not only is reliant upon one's own perception but upon our connections with others. How do they see us?

Our purpose at **my manifesto** is to help you tap into your strengths and express what constitutes your unique 'good life' and what characterises you as a 'good person'. Together we seek to avoid the crisis of which Halfpenny speaks, or at least respond to it, to use its energy to drive you into a truly rich second act.

*The study took place in the 1970's by Philip Brickman from the North-western University. The control group were randomly selected people from the Illinois telephone directory.