



## Wellbeing Insights

How was your festive season?

Interestingly this year as I headed into my 7<sup>th</sup> decade of life, I noticed changes in my ability to surf the bustling occasions that accompany this season. What would have been a sought-after situation – many opportunities to share stories, food and drink - in my younger years, became onerous.

I would like to think that I haven't become a 'grinch' a 'kill joy', or 'nay-sayer', especially when I have the wonderful words in my personal manifesto, 'Say yes to life!' However, I do now have to be measured in order to be able to offer a quality contribution to an occasion. I am wondering, if this has always been the case, especially with the accent on 'quality', and I have just not had the awareness to realise that what I was offering could sometimes be characterised as 'dutiful' or 'time-serving' or even 'self-indulgent'?

Leaving that thought aside, concerning though it is, I realise the wisdom of the statement, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." \* When I was in the midst of the social whirl in earlier years, I did not, perhaps could not, precisely discern the quality of my contribution nor the nature of my motivations. I have the benefit now, when looking back, to notice the blurred lines which surely existed.

I do not want to be too harsh on my former self, nor do I want to put myself into retrospective shame, but I would like to think that I have grown in understanding of myself now. Just as importantly, I have also better developed my ability to check in with others in the moment to see how they are faring in the interaction. These two learned behaviours combined, help ensure a better quality of exchange occurs, one that won't leave me in emotional debt or self-recrimination.

Consequently, this year, I found myself withdrawing from large gatherings sooner than usual, looking for quiet to restore my energies before re-entering conversations. The wisdom of this, the reward of self-compassion – and increased awareness of others' needs too – is a beautiful salve to my life. If only I had known this years earlier – but, that is the paradox isn't it?

\*Attributed to the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard.