

MEANING IS THE NEW MONEY

There is a change happening. People are realising that money has little value in itself and are searching for meaning. Here is how you can find the meaning in your life.

BY BELINDA ANDERSON

"It is not what we get. But who we become, what we contribute ... that gives meaning to our lives."
— Anthony Robbins

What does living a meaningful life mean to you? There is no right or wrong answer — everything in life has a different meaning for different people. Having a life full of meaning is not something that needs to correlate with your bank balance, how you look, what you wear, purchase, drive or live in — it has nothing to do with money and materialism; it is an inside job.

The challenge

Do you have days when you feel your life lacks meaning? Do your thoughts and rampaging ego constantly tell you "There has to be more to life than this" and "I want more"? Are you failing the game of life?

Undeniably, the world is changing and moving faster than most of us can keep up with. It is becoming more challenging by the minute. Some choose to go with it, attracting the grace of life, while others choose to resist it, creating further problems and suffering. They fight the battle and end up becoming so disconnected from their true selves that they lose touch with their lives' purpose and meaning.

We all have days when we've had enough. We all struggle to figure out how to cope and we all lose touch at some time with what it means to live a meaningful life. Many of us spend a whole lifetime just existing and scraping by instead of living. It can be easy to run through the motions of life without pausing to think about its meaning.

So don't for one minute think you're alone, because you're not.

People do not have time any more and as a society we are neglecting our needs, our health and ourselves, which is leading to an unhappy and meaningless existence. Life is super-busy; most of us operate on auto-pilot and many of us live lives feeling tired instead of inspired. We work harder and longer than ever before and we tend to search for meaning outside ourselves by chasing shallow pursuits that have no real significance in the grand scheme of things. Our priorities are usually focused on achievement and we tend to measure success in dollars earned and materialism. Meaning is not exactly high on most of our lists — that is until we become depleted and are forced to make new choices and re-evaluate our priorities.

It's very easy in today's society to get caught up in the big whirlwind of always "wanting it all". We want bigger, better, faster and more expensive just so we can have more than the next guy, and we want it now. We start to

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Simplify your life.



believe that we won't be happy and content in life until we have status, fame and fortune, but even those who have it all still want more. This is because money and materialism will never fill that big, empty void inside or create a meaningful life. It all means nothing if you are not happy within yourself.

Reconnecting

Can you remember the last time you truly felt the sun and wind on your skin, felt the earth under your feet, noticed the beauty of nature around you, slowed down and savoured time with your family, interacted with your children (without your phone being glued to your ear or head buried in some form of technology) and actually enjoyed the different flavours in your food?

If you answered mostly no, you are obviously in too much of a hurry and have forgotten how to live an authentic and meaningful life. You no longer listen to your heart, your inner voice. Instead, you listen to your busy mind, obey the ego and outside world and in doing so you have stripped the true essence and real meaning away from your life.

You will never find true happiness or live a meaningful life by looking outside yourself or living a superficial life. If you allow your ego and busy mind to drown out your heart, you will prevent yourself from reconnecting with your true self and you will be unable to discover the true meaning of life.

Let's begin with looking at some self-reflective questions you can ask yourself to help you get a clearer perspective on what may be blocking you from living a meaningful life. No one else is listening, so this is your time to dig deep and notice what surfaces.

1. Is what you're doing really worth it?
2. Look at your life. Are the choices you are making worth all the anxiety?
3. Do you find yourself stressing too often about insignificant things?
4. Are you constantly overwhelmed by always wanting to have more or be someone you're not?
5. Do you focus more on drama and negativity than on what really matters?

Your answers may help you see that it is time to move away from the chaotic state. It's time to start to replace meltdown, materialism and money with meaning, meaning, meaning.

If you have a meaningful job, you will enjoy your work. If you have meaningful relationships, you will discover an important key to happiness in life. If you live a

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Start your day consciously and joyously.

meaningful life, you and the world you live in will blossom and the universe will throw an abundance of opportunities your way.

We are all looking for fulfilment and all want to live meaningful lives. The million-dollar question is, how can you cultivate more meaning in your life? Are you looking for it wisely or are you looking for it in all the wrong places?

Cultivating meaning

Here are 10 ideas I believe will help you attract meaning into your life:

1. Know and love who you are. No one in the entire world can do a better job of being you than you. Let go of comparing yourself to others. Believe and trust that you are more than enough. It can be challenging to be ourselves in a world that tries to tempt us to be something — anything — other than who we really are. Our thoughts, our circumstances, and striving for status can all take us away from who we truly are. Social pressure and the celebrity culture can also contribute heavily to turning us into someone we're not. Go deep within, find you and be you (release the ego). Don't be afraid to share who you are with the rest of the world.

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2. Know what's important to you. Set boundaries, know when to say no and only allow others into your life who positively contribute to your personal growth. Invest your time and energy in what's most important by prioritising and knowing what the non-negotiable areas in your life are (they could be things like your health, happiness, family time, time out for yourself). Give your attention and energy to what you do have instead of worrying about what you don't have. Ensure your work/family/fun ratio is balanced and keep an eye on which direction the pendulum wants to constantly swing.

3. What is your passion? What brings you joy and what do you love to do the most? When you discover and pursue your passion, it gives your life meaning and it creates internal happiness and deep satisfaction. If you are not feeling it deep within your heart, it is not your passion. Your heart and intuition are much more powerful than your intellect, so learn to trust and follow them. When your passion appears, unleash it and let your passion, not your pay cheque, guide you towards an abundant life full of meaning.

4. What is your life's purpose? Every one of us has a purpose. What you must not do is confuse this calling with a particular job title, status, fame or fortune. You do not need any of these to live a meaningful life. It could be a mother nurturing her child, a teacher educating a student, or a doctor caring for his or her patient. Each one of us has shown up here with a job to do. Start listening to your heart as opposed to your busy head so that you can begin hearing what you have been put on this earth to do.

5. Increase your awareness. Master how to increase your conscious awareness in all aspects of life. Awareness is a powerful tool that will help you develop skills to stay on course, as you will notice what is really going on in your life. When you are aware of the messages your body gives you, you are able to notice the signs early and act on them before they lead to illness, unhappiness and an unfulfilling existence. Awareness will allow you to notice unpleasant emotions or thoughts as they arise, then it is up to you to suppress them, run away from them, or fully acknowledge them by processing them and letting them go. ☺



Know yourself,
love yourself.

6. Give back. Find a way to give back and serve in a world that is crying out for people of good character who can positively contribute and make an impact. Giving the gift of love and contributing without expecting anything in return is truly something everyone needs to master. What you give out and the love you send out return to you in abundance in strange and mysterious ways. We can all help make the world a better place, but sometimes we get caught up in thinking that what we do is small and insignificant and won't matter in the grand scheme of things. Or we think when we have more money or more time or become someone of status, we can then begin to make an impact. We are all powerful and capable of contributing something positive to the world, whatever that something may be. In turn, that "something" will flow out into the world around us and that's how each of us can make a difference. As you change, the world cannot help but change with you.

7. Simplify. Take a step back and make things less complicated. Keep it simple, keep it real and learn to celebrate life's little pleasures. Practise expressing an attitude of gratitude for all you have in your life. Having gratitude allows you to participate more in life as you notice and appreciate the positives more than the negatives, and that magnifies the pleasures you get from life. Keeping a gratitude journal is something I highly recommend as it allows you to see how fortunate you truly are.

8. Get into the moment. Take a few moments every day just to be present. Allow yourself some time every day to stop "doing" and start "being". In other words, allow yourself to be present and then switch off, idle, or just stop. The world will still carry on while you give yourself some "me" time to slow down and recharge your battery. Learning how to create balance and peace in your daily life will allow you to connect with your true self and discover your purpose and meaning in life.

9. Start your day consciously. How do you start your day? With gratification and happiness or doom and gloom? A day is easily ruined if started by holding on to negativity and resentment. Wouldn't it be nice to get excited about waking in the morning to see what the day will bring? When you wake tomorrow, ask yourself, do I want to think and act like I did yesterday or do I choose to be a new me today? You may also like to ask yourself, if today was my last day, how would I live it?

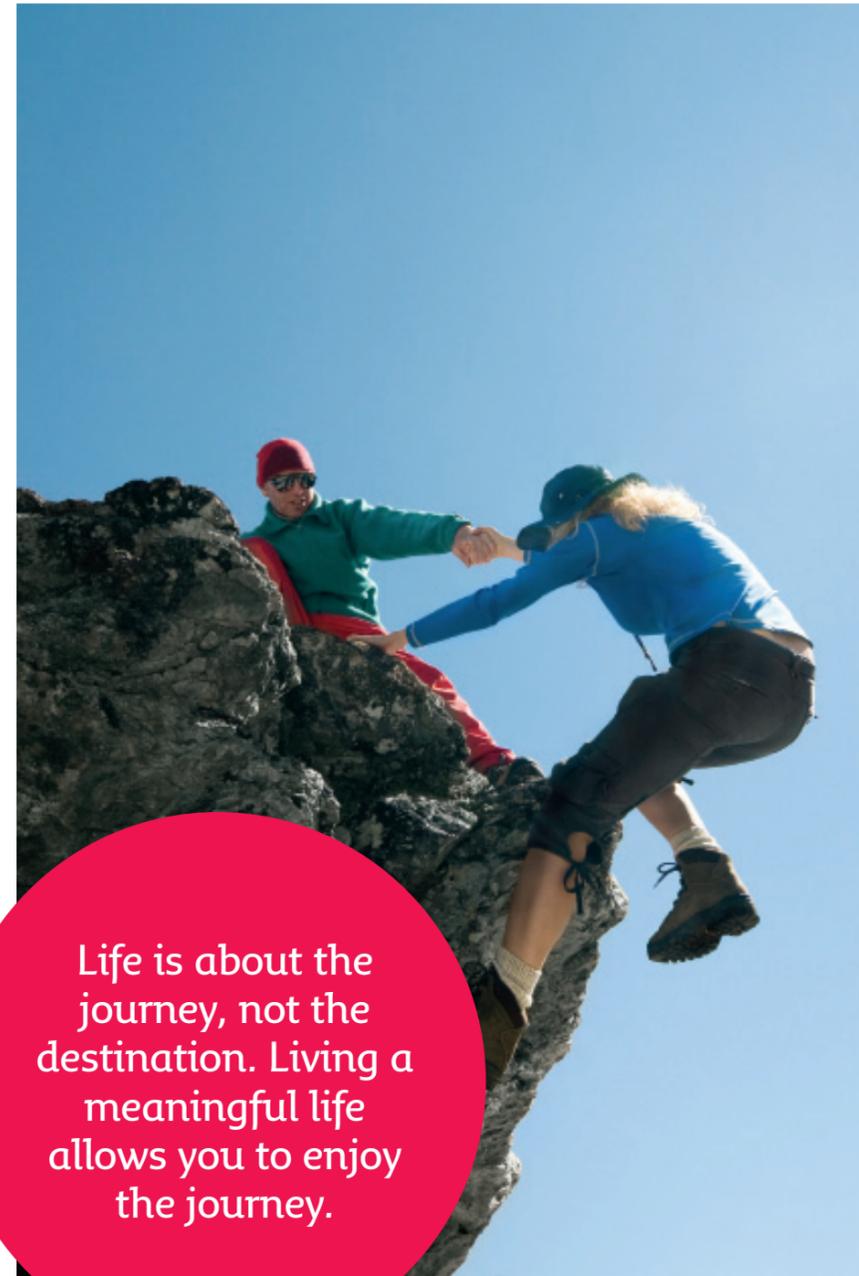
10. Be mindful. Practise meditation to help you switch off your mind. Switching off enables you to switch on and will teach you how to be present, which will then lead you to find an inner peace, where all the things that no longer serve you just fall away. Begin by simply observing your breath. Breathe in for a count of four to

five, allowing your belly and chest to expand, and breathe out also for a count of four to five, allowing everything to just drop away. Notice how your breath enters your body, notice how your breath leaves your body and notice the little pause between each breath. This will allow you to create a sense of peace within yourself. Switching off the mind and looking inside requires a lot of inner work, so don't for one minute think it's easy, especially in the beginning. In the midst of all the craziness and chaos around us, particularly in our minds, the key is to maintain the stillness and peacefulness within by being present and remaining detached — and that is why meditation is so crucial in today's world.

Doing all these things at once may seem quite overwhelming and unrealistic; so, to begin with, choose one and slowly work to two and so on until you are on your right path. Life is always about the journey, not the destination. Living a meaningful life allows you to enjoy the journey.

Living a meaningful life takes work and it is not something you can think of occasionally whenever you feel like it; it takes practice and daily commitment. It is important that you put your time and energy into what you want your life to be, rather than put your time and energy into what you don't want it to be.

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The meaning of meaning

You will have to answer for yourself what a meaningful life means to you. However, as a kick-start to that process, I asked four people who work in and around the fields of self-development and wellness what they thought.

Gabrielle Bernstein, author, motivational speaker and life coach, says, "I believe the meaning of life is to be a teacher of love. We go through a lot of funky stuff so that we can reclaim our faith in love and teach others to do the same."

According to Dr Libby Weaver, holistic nutrition specialist and author, "For me, the meaning of life is to give and to serve. My mission is to educate and inspire people, enhancing their health and happiness and igniting a ripple effect that transforms the world."

Lana Purcell, holistic health counsellor and raw foods coach, believes that living a meaningful life is "to find your passion and purpose and live it, breathe it, be it. Live it to its fullest; operate in your highest vibrational capacity, be it as the best bus driver in the world or the happiest lollypop lady at the school crossing. When you find meaning in what you do and how you do it,

you have found the meaning of your life."

Brook Ramage, general manager of Cabarita Ocean Health Retreat, says, "Love and the search for happiness provide the true meaning of life. Without either, we are settling for nothing more than bare existence."

What's important is to find what connects to your heart. Feeling that what you're doing has significant meaning to you can make a huge difference in your life. A life built on passion and meaning will nourish your soul, which in turn usually feeds your bank balance, too. When you're truly inspired by what you do, serve others and are super-passionate about your work, your capacity to earn money is far greater and this is something you needn't apologise for, as it is happening for all the right reasons — being authentic and being you.

A new beginning

You may be now thinking, "OK, I get all of that ... well, some of it, anyway, but what do I do now?" What you do is start asking yourself some serious questions and ensure you answer them honestly. Stop waiting for tomorrow, next week or next year to start living a meaningful life. Use the present moment, now, to put something that connected with you into practice. Start with small, steady steps and take it as far as you can — there's no limit.

When you wake tomorrow, try saying to yourself, "Thank you." Smile and feel gratitude for all that you have in your life (life is not as bad or as serious as our minds like to make out). Once you start seeing life as a gift and feel blessed for no other reason than just being you and being alive, you know you are on the right track.

The only way to live an amazingly meaningful life is to love who you are and what you do. Everything else is secondary. Discover your meaning and everything else will follow.

"We are visitors on this planet. We are here for 90 or 100 years at the very most. During that period, we must try to do something good, something useful, with our lives. If you contribute to other people's happiness, you will find the true goal, the true meaning of life." — The 14th Dalai Lama ☺

Belinda Anderson is a Pilates and meditation teacher, life coach student, writer, loving wife and proud mother. She is currently working on the final touches of her first book, Living from the Inside Out, A Guide to Healing and Transforming your Life from Within.

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