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LIFE PLANNING: HOW TO PLAN A GREAT LIFE

This time last month I was on a ferry on my way to Paros – a small Greek island – wondering about the swimming holiday I was about to embark upon. It was a magical holiday – I'll tell you a bit more about it later – but as I sat on the ferry deck trying to focus on the horizon (supposedly helps with sea sickness: not sure it works!) I thought about everything I had done to get me there: miles of swimming, finding and booking flights, hotels, buses and ferry crossings, verifying my passport was still OK, buying Euros, checking how hot it was going to be, buying new clothes and trying (but failing) to get a new goggle strap from the USA at the last minute. All for a week's holiday. Nothing special you might be thinking: most of you will have experienced a version of this for your own holidays. But what really struck me was how much thought, planning and preparation I had put into this holiday, and in comparison, how little we sometimes put into planning our everyday life. Lets look then at how to plan a great life.

In my coaching I often offer my client's my 'magic' coaching wand and ask them to wave it to create a beautiful life for themselves. My client's usually smile (yes, I can 'see' a smile on the phone!) and describe something quite wonderful and unique to them. But when I ask them how they could make it happen, often the smile begins to fade. Suddenly the difference between their current life and the life they dream of seems huge. Yet in coaching terms I know they have taken the first big step and that is giving voice to what they would really love to do. This is how it all begins. Let me help you with this too.

When people start coaching with me, amongst other things I give them a questionnaire. One of the questions is: "If you had all of the money you needed, where and how would you live?". The answer is virtually always: "I want to live by the sea (in the country/ somewhere warm). I want to do some work – but have lots of free time to do all the things I love." Sounds good – but this is often as far as people get unless they are prompted to start thinking about this some more. I ask them questions like: Which coastline do you have in mind? What does your new home look like? What features does your new home have? What do you need from the city (town/village) where you want to live? How many hours do you want to work? How much will you earn? What do you want to do in your free time? And so on because if the dream life is to become a reality,

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you need to know what it is you REALLY want. Let me explain. The statement: “I want to live by the sea” is a just vague dream. The chances of making it come true are slim. If in comparison you were to say: “I want to live in Brighton in a spacious 3 bedroom Regency apartment on the first or second floor overlooking the sea” then this already sounds more ‘real’ and far more likely to come true. Take a pen and for 5 minutes write about a life you would love to lead. Don’t be afraid of making it big. In fact make it as big, beautiful and amazing as possible! No-one has to read it if you don’t want them too – it can be just for fun – or it can be the first step of your planning your new life.

When people first contemplate planning their life, they tend to get stuck with what they think are obstacles. They say things like “But what about my mortgage?” or “I can’t plan to meet the love of my life” and many other things they see as stopping them moving forward. But these are not the real reasons for holding someone back from living a life that’s truly great. Usually the real reason is fear. We don’t like to admit it, but most of us, including me, are fearful of big changes. The fears are often: What if it all goes wrong? What if I loose my money? What if my relationships are destroyed? These are genuine concerns, and you do need to look at the full picture when planning and creating a new life. BUT, what if you could make your dream life come true?

Let me ask you: Do you want to get to the end of your days and say: “If only...” or do you want to smile and say: “Yes I did that! Wasn’t that just amazing?!” If stepping out of your comfort zone lead you to your dreamed of destination, would it be worth it? For me, definitely yes! Even at the risk of failing, I would rather have given it my best shot rather than not, because life is too short and too precious to stop ‘just-in-case-it-doesn’t-work-out’. Do you realise the impact of one person can have? When someone is living the life of the their dreams, they have so much to offer. With lots of people living their dream life, our world would change for the better – and that would be truly amazing!

After giving voice to the life you want (by speaking about it or writing it down), the next step is to research it. If you plan to move to a new city or town, what’s it really like there? How do house prices compare with where you are now? What about work, schools, local facilities and entertainment? Do these match your needs too? If you want to radically change your work, what training (if any) do you need? Will this impact on

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your lifestyle? Is it possible to transition gradually? If money is an issue, what other solutions are there? (and yes there is *always* a solution even to thorny money issues).

In business, if you want to grow, become more efficient, borrow money or do things differently, then your bank manager (consultant or coach) will encourage you to make a business plan. In simple terms a business plan is just an analysis of where you are now, where you want to get to, and how you are going to achieve it. You can do the same with your own life: write a plan. In the 'how' section, break it down into small steps. If your dream is to move to Spain, enrolling in a Spanish Language class might be a good first step. Signing up with Spanish estate agencies, or planning an exploratory visit might be more steps in your plan. Breaking it down into small parts makes it easier to do rather than trying to do everything at once.

If you would like some help in planning and creating a great life for yourself, then I would be delighted to coach you – just call or email me.

Greek Island Swimming Holiday with SwimTrek

After reaching a 'certain' age, I decided each year I would do something special and different. This year I chose a holiday in Greece where we would swim between 6 islands.



The holiday was amazing! I met a great group of people. I fell in love with sea swimming. I did some lovely walks and found time to meditate each day. Most of all I loved the experience of swimming in deep turquoise waters where rays of light and the waves created enchanting shadow patterns beneath me whilst I swam. All the time I was 'watched over' and encouraged by Simon and Katherine (our swimming guides), so I felt safe too.

SwimTrek was formed by Simon Murie – a wonderful example of someone planning and creating a great life. From working in gold and precious stone mines, Simon took his passion for sea swimming and created a life and business that he loves and shares with others. He is proof you can do it – and so can you! To find out more about swimming holidays with SwimTrek, see www.swimtrek.com

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