

How are you ?living the dream??

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Pinch me, because I'm not "living the dream"?and I'd very much like to wake up!

We often toss around this sarcastic response about life, but I thought I'd delve deeper into this so-called "dream life"?we're living. Living the dream basically means doing what you want to do or living the type of life you want to live without any regrets. It's sort of like retirement when you've achieved all your goals and you can enjoy the fruits of your labour.

I?think this concept is what has motivated our species for generations. We all want to succeed, have that dream job, raise that dream family and enjoy that fantastic lifestyle.

It's hard to say how many people actually attain that goal in all respects. I?have met many people who are doing just that, with new money or old; with career and business success.

From all the people I?have met, interviewed and questioned, success happens through hard work, seizing opportunities, taking risk and yes, luck, sometimes lots of it. Of course, those who've been given a head start through familial ties and wealth tend to reach their goals faster and with fewer hurdles.

Ideally, once you achieve the pinnacle of success, you don't have to "dream"?anymore because your dreams have become reality.

Being 50-something, I'm from the tail end of the Baby Boom. My parents were post-war immigrants who arrived on our shores with nothing more than a suitcase and a strong work ethic. That allowed them to create a decent life for themselves and their children, on modest incomes. Of course, everything's relative. They were able to afford a modest house, car, food and provide for their children. We weren't wealthy, but we really had no cares in the world and were quite comfortable living frugally.

I'll never forget some of the discussions I?had with my dad, trying to convince him that credit cards were the way of the future! He got one a year before his death and managed to rack up a bit of a bill at the casino! He never lived to see Kim and I?in our first home; never got a handle on the Internet and never had a cell phone.

His dream was having a house that was mortgage-free and raising kids who were equipped to go out on their own.

Did he succeed? Partly. My sister died in her mid-40s, and suffered through dialysis, a kidney transplant and blindness.

I followed the traditional path offered to most of us, albeit a bit later. I?went to college, worked in my profession, fell in love, got married and became a father.

Not very exciting or adventurous, but enough for many people.

Once kids reach a certain age, parents basically work for them, and put their own needs aside. We've done that. We accept the costs and sacrifices that are necessary to give our kids what they need.

I?try, but I can't really think back far enough to remember what I once believed was the "dream life."?I?remember being in high school and telling my best friend that I wanted to own a Porsche one day. At the time a 911 sold for a whopping \$37,000.

Other than that, we never thought very far into the future. I think we just assumed we'd get married and have kids, just as it had been done for millennia.

For years, I've tried to uncover what others believe to be the true definition of success and happiness. I've kept a journal of sorts with

their responses, hoping to one day publish the results. People I've solicited have been more than happy to offer their insights. Some of the better ones include:

"Happiness is, for me, a state of mind making me content with what I am and what I have."

"Do things as they happen, complete them and close the file."

Happiness is "feeling good about the direction your life is taking" and success is "attaining the goals I've set ... with consideration for the outside factors that I cannot control or change."

Happiness is a "feeling of contentment which comes from maintaining a positive outlook on things."

Most point to the value of family and friends and the fact money or material things are not the measure of happiness or success.

With one child in university and our boy getting his driver's licence for the first time, our focus is on them. We don't have the time or money to plan for expensive Caribbean holidays, new cars or home renovations. These are things we simply have to accept.

Have we abandoned our dreams? Not entirely.

Kim and I are hoping to get away one day, to rekindle those embers on some hot, sandy beach. We'd love to do some home repairs and fix up the basement - it seems our kids may be with us longer than we'd hope. We have outstanding bills to pay.

Keeping my nose to the grindstone and keeping things intact on the home front are what motivate me. Kim still has a couple of attainable career goals she's pursuing.

To ask me now what my ideal life looks like, I'd have to say to continue on the straight and narrow; leverage opportunities; network, and enjoy the people I meet every day. I've always tried to be myself - to dance to my own music and not be afraid to wear vintage clothing. I know what my responsibilities are, but I do like to joke around quite a bit. A sense of humour has served me well.

We can heed life advice from gurus like Tony Robbins. We can be brave and optimistic. We can believe in ourselves.

And we can dream.

What's yours?