

Take Charge of Your Life

By

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The majority of us are exhausted from climbing the corporate ladder, dressing for success and trying to balance our work and family lives. We live as if we are careening down a



freeway at warp speed. The French philosopher Rene Descartes said, “I think therefore I am.” Our modern day version of this has become “I do therefore I am.” So many of us live by the mantra “I have to keep up,” “I am what I do,” “I have to push myself,” “I have to prove my worth,” “I have to keep going.” As long as you continue to subscribe to the philosophy that you are what you do you’ll be driven to prove yourself, please other people and live up to someone

else’s standards. In other words, your life won’t be your own.

Stop and consider for a moment what would happen if you took the next available exit on the freeway of your life, pulled onto a quiet country lane, slowed down and reflected on your life. What would happen if you asked yourself, “Are you doing too much?” “Are you driven by societal and peer pressures?” “Are you living the life you want to live?” As you ponder these questions you may discover that you want to make some changes. You may find that you need to reassess your priorities based on what you’ve determined is most meaningful in your life. You may decide that you need more balance, more time

for yourself. You may realize that you have to take greater charge of where you invest your time and energy.

One of the cornerstones of living a high quality life is to know what you value—what’s most meaningful in your life. Yet when our life is all about completing the millions of tasks on our “to do” list we often lose our perspective. We lose our ability to discern between what’s important and what’s not because everything feels equally urgent – equally critical.

No matter how frantic life gets, no matter how much frenzy seems to be present, the most successful people are able to rise above the pandemonium and maintain their perspective. They can do this because they know what’s important. Their values are their compass--they keep them on course regardless of the chaos and confusion of life. These people maintain a vision of what truly matters, what their life is about and what they want it to be.

By clarifying your values you can adjust your life so that you invest your time and energy in those things you hold sacred. Yet in order to do this you have to ask yourself what do I value? What’s most important to me? These kinds of questions will not only help you to understand yourself on a deeper level, but ultimately to refocus your life around what’s truly meaningful. As strange as this may seem, it’s actually less important to understand the meaning of life itself than it is to understand the meaning of *your* life.

Think about your core values and principles. Ask yourself the question, what matters? List the qualities and attributes that you consider essential to living your best life. These are the values you use to define yourself.

As you read over your list how do you feel? What did you learn about yourself? Were you surprised by anything? Now ask yourself, how are these values reflected in your

current life? Which values are you neglecting? In what ways would your life be different if you honored these values?

Evaluating your values is the foundation for leading a life you love. The next time you're faced with a decision ask yourself, "Is this decision consistent with my deepest self, with what is most meaningful in my life? Use this question as your compass to keep you true to your core beliefs.

Stephanie is an acclaimed speaker and author. She speaks from experience. Stephanie is the "go to" expert for those who seek to create quality driven lives. Stephanie is America's foremost life balance expert. Her new CD program, **30 Days to Sanity** contains powerful, innovative, practical tools to reduce stress, balance work and family and make time for what truly matters. Stephanie is the author of **Chicken Soup for the Soul's Life Lessons for Women: 7 Essential Ingredients for a Balanced Life, If Not Now, When? Reclaiming Ourselves at Midlife and Life Coaching for Parents: Six Weeks to Sanity**. For more information please visit www.stephaniemarston.com