

sort **your** life out**Be thankful**

At some point in our lives events happens that make you stop in your tracks and look at your life with a whole new perspective. From this point forward you gain a new direction, develop a new insight and also have an opportunity to let go of things that no longer serve you. The degree to which this happens depends upon the event and your attitude towards it. Just recently two such events happened to me within very close proximity and both made an impact upon my life. One involved the loss of control of my car at high speed and a skid across three lanes of motorway traffic. The second, seeing a scan of our yet to be born baby for the first time.

Luckily for me the blow out and subsequent loss of control of my car miraculously did not involve anyone else that day or cause damage to me or the car! Three days later at my partners' side

looking at a blurred but definite figure of our first child asleep in the womb, blissfully unaware of all the mayhem of the outside world. Both events made me stop and appreciate all that I have and all that is about to come. Whilst the stresses of running a business and the strains of commuting plus the imminent move to a new home, may consume me daily, the love of my partner, family and friends and the prospect of fatherhood are my blessings, which I now count even more diligently. During the course of these events the media were running a story about Jose Mourinho the manager of Chelsea FC and the alleged fall out with his clubs owner and a possible termination of contract. Mourinho is all too familiar with pressure and living under media scrutiny, but his sense of balance and grounding was bought to the fore in this recent quote.

"The only pressure is the pressure I put on myself. I don't accept pressure from other people. If people write bad things about me, I don't get depressed about that. If the club decides to sack me because of bad results, that's part of the game. If that happens, I'll be a millionaire and I will get another club a couple of months later. I have a happy family, my kids are healthy, I have a lot of friends and I live a good life. Pressure of what?"

Jose Mourinho

For all his success and the incredible pressure of living under the close media scrutiny, it appears that Mourinho has his priorities intact. Cynically, perhaps with several millions in the bank, we could all

feel the same, but do we need that bank balance to appreciate all that is good in our life? In this article we ask you to stop and consider where you are right here right now. Do you appreciate all that you have, all that you achieved, and all that you are working towards? As we strive relentlessly to keep up with the pace of life and work towards reaching our goals with the hope of achieving excellence, we can consistently over look significant people, places and events in our lives. It's also not uncommon to forget just how far we have come and how much we have achieved. At our workshops Pete and I are constantly amazed at how often people overlook all that is wholesome and good in their life as they search for that something else.

At these workshops we frequently have a table of food in front of the group and a regular feature on that a table is a ring donut. Whilst the donut proves useful when discussing food groups and what to eat and what to avoid, it also fulfils another purpose in understanding and appreciating the good things in our life.

For a moment I want you to imagine that donut, where is your attention drawn, what do you focus on? I'm sure like most people you will focus on the hole in the middle. Just like the participants at our workshop, you are drawn to what is missing, rather than what exists. All too often people tell us what they haven't got in their lives, be it a relationship, children, meaningful employment etc. They fail to see the positive aspects of their lives and the potential that is before them and time and again we here the excuse "I would be happy if....." (Fill in the blanks as you wish!)

"What we see depends mainly on what we look for."

Chinese Proverb

We've never had it so good

"You don't know how lucky you are!" was a regular put down directed by my parents at my sister and I as we were growing up. It was the critical remark used particularly when we wanted something new or were bored with what we were doing. Once it had passed my parents lips, the line had been drawn and we knew a lecture would soon follow on the subject of how much we had compared to how little they had. My parents were right, their generation had grown up during the war, with the real fear of air raids and the restricted diet and lifestyle associated with rationing, and the hardships suffered by their parents was greater still. With greater lifestyle choices a higher standard of living and more

disposable income, we have never had it so good and yet greater numbers are suffering a serious emotional distress. It is reported that in Britain almost a quarter of us suffer from depression or anxiety and a further quarter are on the verge of such distress.

Just as the experiences of my childhood proved, we are becoming increasingly confused between our needs and wants. According to Oliver James in his book *Affluenza*, two thirds of Britons believe



that they cannot afford everything they really need. Even when earnings increase the perceived disparity remains and the potential for anxiety and depression amplify. For many people living in the western world, they feel like a hamster on a wheel, never having enough time, never having enough money and waiting for the promotion or windfall which will help them get onto the next step of the ladder. For almost all the utopian ideal of a work life balance remains just a dream. James believes that many of us have, or are close to contracting the affluenza virus.

"We have become absolutely obsessed with measuring ourselves and others through the distorted lens of affluenza values.....The great majority of people now define their lives through earnings, possessions, appearances and celebrity and those things are making them miserable because they impede the meeting of our fundamental needs."

Oliver James

James introduces many vaccines for the affluenza virus that questions our attitude towards various issues, such as raising children, our appearance, our view of the opposite sex and our core values. Through this process we are led to the unavoidable conclusion, that to ensure our mental health we must pursue our needs rather than our wants. The fundamental needs have been narrowed down by James to these four: we need to feel secure both emotionally and materially; we need to feel part of a

community; we feel competent, that we are not useless and we need to feel autonomous, self sufficient and in control of our destiny. How do they apply to you? Perhaps you have overlooked the fact that your needs are met, like our view of the donut, an opinion shared by Schoch in the concluding chapter of *The Secrets of Happiness*,

"They squander the opportunity that is always before us: to become, not someone else, but a better version of the person we are. We are always in the right place, though we do our best to forget it. This theme of accepting our ordinariness appears in many versions of happiness."

TASK

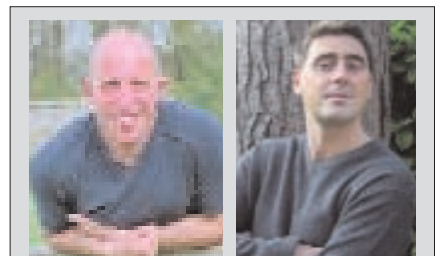
Academic research has shown that keeping a "gratitude journal" makes you happier. People who write down five things for which they are grateful each day are on the whole happier, more optimistic and more likely to achieve their goals than those who don't.

Starting today keep a record of five things that you are appreciative of each day. Initiate this with something simple, like the touch of a loved one a smile from a friend, the food on your table. Learn to value the simple things.

"Often people try to live their lives backwards: they try to have more things, or more money, in order to do more of what they want so that they will be happier. The way it actually works is the reverse. You must first be who you really are, then do what you really need to do, in order to have what you want."

Margaret Young

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Pete Cohen and Carl Benton are both health and fitness professionals and Life Coaches. Pete is also a motivational speaker and author of numerous best-selling books. For more information visit www.petecohen.com or email Pete at info@petecohen.com or Carl at balance-cb@fsmail.net