

# THE GOOD LIFE

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

In this current economy it is difficult to imagine we can really experience 'the good life'. If I asked ten people their interpretation of this term I am sure I would get ten different answers. Most commonly it would sound like this. "The good life is one where I have no worries about money, about job loss or about safety and security. I am free to be whoever I want to be, do whatever I want to do and go wherever I like, when I like. Now that, right there, is the good life!" they would say.

Many people go to extraordinary lengths to experience 'the good life'. They work long hours, stress themselves to the max and/or go into serious credit card debt. I am sure you remember the old Harry Chapin song, 'Cat's in the cradle'. The song's message is all too familiar. It's about the dad who was always too busy for his son until in the end the son was too busy for his dad, a pivotal lyric being, "I wanna be like you Dad, I just wanna be like you."

Why do we keep striving and struggling for more and more stuff to make us happy? I have heard it said by some wealthy people that the more stuff they have the more expensive and time consuming it is to maintain the lifestyle. Not only is there insurance needed to cover possessions, but it takes time to clean pools, maintain vehicles, toys, the beach house or the recreation vehicle. It seems the more things we have the more we want, so we strive harder and harder to get the next big thing. This mentality affects children in that they may not be as inclined to look after their toys when they know they can just get more.

The question is, do we really have to have 'X' amount of dollars to secure a good life? What about the wise old saying, 'The best things in life are free'? Let's think about it. What were the very best holidays like that you remember? Ours were tenting at the beach. Swimming, playing in the sand and eating our food around a makeshift table were free. We had fantastic fun. Our kids climbed trees, floated in the water in inner tubes and found new friends to climb the rocks with. What are the best memories of your childhood? Mine were making houses out of boxes and sheets, playing in the yard, running in the fields and later, riding my bicycle all around the neighborhood or riding my friend's horse. My parents didn't have any money to spare and so buying stuff was a rare treat. I loved my dolls and looked after them carefully. The 'Waltons' and Mayberry's Andy and Opie lived wholesome and uncomplicated lives? Didn't you ever think you would love to live like them?

Your kids will tell you without hesitation that they want your attention, not stuff. More than anything they want you to be there to share their experiences and to encourage and support them. The more time you spend with them, the more valued they feel.

Take a good, long look at your priorities. Often, a stressful lifestyle just sneaks up and takes over and you end up feeling like a mouse in a wheel. The only way to end this mad cycle is to STOP what you are doing, LOOK at the effect it is having on you and your family, and LISTEN to the needs of your household.

Take control by creating a plan for the year. Divide your time equally between work and family. Listen to what your children want from you and try doing stuff that doesn't cost money. If your job is stressing you out, reconsider your direction. If you are thinking of upgrading your home, car or stuff, stop, look and listen. Is the expense of time and money going to enrich your family life or add a greater burden and give you less time for the family? The good life is when you and your family are truly happy without the need for stuff.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.